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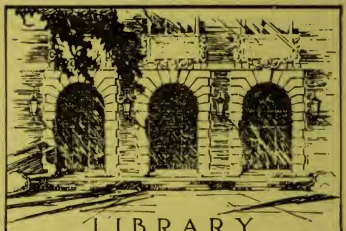

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THE WORKS OF

HENRY SETON MERRIMAN

VOL. XIV

THE LAST HOPE

THE LAST HOPE

BY

HENRY SETON MERRIMAN

"What is it thou knowest, sweet voice?" I cried.
"A hidden hope," the voice replied.

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	Le Roi est Mort	1
II.	Vive le Roi	10
III.	The Return of "The Last Hope"	19
IV.	The Marquis's Creed	28
V.	On the Dyke	37
VI.	The Story of the Castaways	46
VII.	On the Scent	55
VIII.	The Little Boy who was a King ...	64
IX.	A Mistake	74
X.	In the Italian House	83
XI.	A Beginning	91
XII.	The Secret of Gemosac	99
XIII.	Within the Gates	108
XIV.	The Lifted Veil	117
XV.	The Turn of the Tide	126
XVI.	The Gamblers	134
XVII.	On the Pont Royal	143
XVIII.	The City that soon forgets	152
XIX.	In the Breach	161
XX.	"Nineteen"	169
XXI.	No. 8 Ruelle St. Jacob	178
XXII.	Dropping the Pilot	187

CHAPTER		PAGE
XXIII.	A Simple Banker	197
XXIV.	The Lane of many Turnings	204
XXV.	Sans Rancune	212
XXVI.	Returned Empty	221
XXVII.	Out of the Mouths of Babes	229
XXVIII.	Barebone's Price	238
XXIX.	In the Dark	247
XXX.	In the Furrow again	256
XXXI.	The Thursday of Madame de Chantonnay	265
XXXII.	Primroses	273
XXXIII.	Dormer Colville is Blind	282
XXXIV.	A Sordid Matter	291
XXXV.	A Square Man	299
XXXVI.	Mrs. St. Pierre Lawrence does not understand	308
XXXVII.	An Understanding	317
XXXVIII.	A Coup-d'État	326
XXXIX.	"John Darby"	335
XL.	Farlingford once More	343

THE LAST HOPE

CHAPTER I

LE ROI EST MORT

"THERE; that's it. That's where they buried Frenchman," said Andrew—known as River Andrew. For there was another Andrew who earned his living on the sea.

River Andrew had conducted the two gentlemen from "The Black Sailor" to the churchyard by their own request. A message had been sent to him in the morning that this service would be required of him, to which he had returned the answer that they would have to wait until the evening. It was his day to go round Marshford way with dried fish, he said; but in the evening they could see the church if they still set their minds on it.

River Andrew combined the light duties of grave-digger and clerk to the parish of Farlingford in Suffolk with a small but steady business in fish of his own drying, nets of his own netting, and pork slain and dressed by his own weather-beaten hands.

For Farlingford lies in that part of England which reaches seaward toward the Fatherland, and seems to have acquired from that proximity an insatiable appetite for

sausages and pork. On these coasts the killing of pigs and the manufacture of sausages would appear to employ the leisure of the few, who for one reason or another have been deemed unfit for the sea. It is not our business to inquire why River Andrew had never used the fickle element. All that lay in the past. And in a degree he was saved from the disgrace of being a landsman by the smell of tar and bloaters that heralded his coming, by the blue jersey and the brown homespun trousers which he wore all the week, and by the saving word which distinguished him from the poor inland lubbers who had no dealings with water at all.

He had this evening laid aside his old sou'wester—worn in fair and foul weather alike—for his Sunday hat. His head-part was therefore official and lent additional value to the words recorded. He spoke them, moreover, with a dim note of aggressiveness which might only have been racy of a soil breeding men who are curt and clear of speech. But there was more than an East Anglian bluffness in the statement and the manner of its delivery, as his next observation at once explained.

"Passen thinks it's over there by the yew-tree—but he's wrong. That there one was a wash-up found by old Willem the lighthouse keeper one morning early. No ! this is where Frenchman was laid by."

He indicated with the toe of his sea-boot a crumbling grave which had never been distinguished by a headstone. The grass grew high all over Farlingford churchyard, almost hiding the mounds where the forefathers slept side by side with the nameless "wash-ups," to whom they had extended a last hospitality.

River Andrew had addressed his few remarks to the younger of his two companions, a well-dressed, smartly set-up man of forty or thereabouts, who in turn translated

the gist of them into French for the information of his senior, a little white-haired gentleman whom he called "Monsieur le Marquis."

He spoke glibly enough in either tongue, with a certain indifference of manner. This was essentially a man of cities, and one better suited to the pavement than the rural quiet of Farlingford. To have the gift of tongues is no great recommendation to the British born, and River Andrew looked askance at this fine gentleman while he spoke French. He had received letters at the post-office under the name of Dormer Colville: a name not unknown in London and Paris, but of which the social fame had failed to travel even to Ipswich, twenty miles away from this mouldering churchyard.

"It's getting on for twenty-five years come Michaelmas," put in River Andrew. "I wasn't digger then; but I remember the burial well enough. And I remember Frenchman—same as if I see him yesterday."

He plucked a blade of grass from the grave and placed it between his teeth.

"He were a mystery, he were," he added, darkly, and turned to look musingly across the marshes toward the distant sea. For River Andrew, like many hawkers of cheap wares, knew the indirect commercial value of news.

The little white-haired Frenchman made a gesture of the shoulders and outspread hands indicative of a pious horror at the condition of this neglected grave. The meaning of his attitude was so obvious that River Andrew shifted uneasily from one foot to the other.

"Passen," he said, "he don't take no account of the graves. He's what you might call a bookworm. Always a sitting indoors reading books and pictures. Butcher Franks turns his sheep in from time to time. But along of

these tempests and the hot sun the grass has shot up a bit. Frenchman's no worse off than others. And there's some as are fallen in altogether."

He indicated one or two graves where the mound had sunk, and suggestive hollows were visible in the grass.

"First, it's the coffin that bu'sts in beneath the weight, then it's the bones," he added, with that grim realism which is begotten of familiarity.

Dormer Colville did not trouble to translate these general truths. He suppressed a yawn as he contemplated the tottering headstones of certain master-mariners and Trinity-pilots taking their long rest in the immediate vicinity. The churchyard lay on the slope of rising ground upon which the village of Farlingford straggled upward in one long street. Farlingford had once been a town of some commercial prosperity. Its story was the story of half a dozen ports on this coast—a harbour silted up, a commerce absorbed by a more prosperous neighbour nearer to the railway.

Below the churchyard was the wide street which took a turn eastward at the gates and led straight down to the river-side. Farlingford Quay—a little colony of warehouses and tarred huts—was separated from Farlingford proper by a green, where the water glistened at high tide. In olden days the Freemen of Farlingford had been privileged to graze their horses on the green. In these later times the lord of the manor pretended to certain rights over the pasturage, which Farlingford, like one man, denied him.

"A mystery," repeated River Andrew, waiting very clearly for Mr. Dormer Colville to translate the suggestive word to the French gentleman. But Colville only yawned. "And there's few in Farlingford as knew Frenchman as well as I did."

Mr. Colville walked toward the church porch, which seemed to appeal to his sense of the artistic; for he studied the Norman work with the eye of a connoisseur. He was evidently a cultured man, more interested in a work of art than in human story.

River Andrew, seeing him depart, jingled the keys which he carried in his hand, and glanced impatiently toward the older man. The Marquis de Gemosac, however, ignored the sound as completely as he had ignored River Andrew's remarks. He was looking round him with eyes which had once been dark and bright, and were now dimly yellow. He looked from tomb to tomb, vainly seeking one that should be distinguished, if only by the evidence of a little care at the hands of the living. He looked down the wide grass-grown street—partly paved after the manner of the Netherlands — toward the quay, where the brown river gleamed between the walls of the weather-beaten brick buildings. There was a ship lying at the wharf, half laden with hay; a coasting craft from some of the greater tidal rivers, the Orwell or the Blackwater. A man was sitting on a piece of timber on the quay, smoking as he looked seaward. But there was no one else in sight. For Farlingford was half depopulated, and it was tea-time. Across the river lay the marshes, unbroken by tree or hedge, barren of even so much as a hut. In the distance, hazy and grey in the eye of the North Sea, a lighthouse stood dimly, like a pillar of smoke. To the south—so far as the eye could pierce the sea haze—marshes. To the north—where the river ran between bare dykes—marshes.

And withal a silence which was only intensified by the steady hum of the wind through the gnarled branches of the few churchyard trees which turn a crouching back toward the ocean.

In all the world—save, perhaps, in the Arctic world—it would be hard to find a picture emphasising more clearly the fact that a man's life is but a small matter, and the memory of it like the seed of grass upon the wind to be blown away and no more recalled.

The bearer of one of the great names of France stood knee-deep in the sun-tanned grass and looked slowly round as if seeking to imprint the scene upon his memory. He turned to glance at the crumbling church behind him, built long ago by men speaking the language in which his own thoughts found shape. He looked slowly from end to end of the ill-kept burial ground, crowded with the bones of the nameless and insignificant dead, who, after a life passed in the daily struggle to wrest a sufficiency of food from a barren soil, or the greater struggle to hold their own against a greedy sea, had faded from the memory of the living, leaving naught behind them but a little mound where the butcher put his sheep to graze.

Monsieur de Gemosac was so absorbed in his reflections that he seemed to forget his surroundings and stood above the grave, pointed out to him by River Andrew, oblivious to the cold wind that blew in from the sea, deaf to the clink of the sexton's inviting keys, forgetful of his companion who stood patiently waiting within the porch. The Marquis was a little bent man, spare of limb, heavy of shoulder, with snow-white hair against which his skin, brown and wrinkled as a walnut shell, looked sallow like old ivory. His face was small and aquiline ; not the face of a clever man, but clearly the face of an aristocrat. He had the grand manner too, and that quiet air of self-absorption which usually envelops the bearers of historic names.

Dormer Colville watched him with a good-natured patience which pointed, as clearly as his attitude and

yawning indifference, to the fact that he was not at Farlingford for his own amusement.

Presently he lounged back again toward the Marquis and stood behind him.

"The wind is cold, Marquis," he said, pleasantly. "One of the coldest spots in England. What would Mademoiselle say if I allowed you to take a chill?"

De Gemosac turned and looked at him over his shoulder with a smile full of pathetic meaning. He spread out his arms in a gesture indicative of horror at the bleakness of the surroundings; at the mournfulness of the decaying village; the dreary hopelessness of the mouldering church and tombs.

"I was thinking, my friend," he said. "That was all. It is not surprising . . . that one should think."

Colville heaved a sigh and said nothing. He was, it seemed, essentially a sympathetic man; not of a thoughtful habit himself, but tolerant of thought in others. It was abominably windy and cold, although the corn was beginning to ripen; but he did not complain. Neither did he desire to hurry his companion in any way.

He looked at the crumbling grave with a passing shadow in his clever and worldly eyes, and composed himself to await his friend's pleasure.

In his way he must have been a philosopher. His attitude did not suggest that he was bored, and yet it was obvious that he was eminently out of place in this remote spot. He had nothing in common, for instance, with River Andrew, and politely yawned that reminiscent fish-curer into silence. His very clothes were of a cut and fashion never before seen in Farlingford. He wore them, too, with an air rarely assumed even in the streets of Ipswich.

Men still dressed with care at this time; for d'Orsay was

not yet dead, though his fame was tarnished. Mr. Dormer Colville was not a dandy, however. He was too clever to go to that extreme and too wise not to be within reach of it in an age when great tailors were great men, and it was quite easy to make a reputation by clothes alone.

Not only was his dress too fine for Farlingford, but his personality was not in tune with this forgotten end of England. His movements were too quick for a slow-moving race of men; no fools, and wiser than their midland brethren; slow because they had yet to make sure that a better way of life had been discovered than that way in which their Saxon forefathers had always walked.

Colville seemed to look at the world with an exploiting eye. He had a speculative mind. Had he lived at the end of the Victorian era instead of the beginning he might have been a notable financier. His quick glance took in all Farlingford in one comprehensive verdict. There was nothing to be made of it. It was uninteresting because it obviously had no future, nor encouraged any enterprise. He looked across the marshes indifferently, following the line of the river as it made its devious way between high dykes to the sea. And suddenly his eye lighted. There was a sail to the south. A schooner was standing in to the river mouth, her sails glowing rosily in the last of the sunset light.

Colville turned to see whether River Andrew had noticed, and saw that landsman looking skyward with an eye that seemed to foretell the early demise of a favouring wind.

"That's 'The Last Hope,'" he said, in answer to Dormer Colville's question. "And it will take all Seth Clubbe's seamanship to save the tide. 'The Last Hope.' There's many a 'Hope,' built at Farlingford, and that's the last, for the yard is closed and there's no more building now."

The Marquis de Gemosac had turned away from the grave, but as Colville approached him he looked back to it with a shake of the head.

"After eight centuries of splendour, my friend," he said. "Can that be the end—that?"

"It is not the end," answered Colville, cheerfully, "It is only the end of a chapter. *Le roi est mort—vive le roi!*"

He pointed with his stick, as he spoke, to the schooner creeping in between the dykes.

CHAPTER II

VIVE LE ROI

"THE LAST HOPE" had been expected for some days. It was known in Farlingford that she was foul, and that Captain Clubbe had decided to put her on the slip-way at the end of the next voyage. Captain Clubbe was a Farlingford man. "The Last Hope" was a Farlingford built ship, and Seth Clubbe was not the captain to go past his own port for the sake of saving a few pounds.

"Farlingford's his nation," they said of him down at the quay. "Born and bred here, man and boy. He's not likely to put her into a Thames dry-dock while the slip-way's standing empty."

All the village gossips naturally connected the arrival of the two gentlemen from London with the expected return of "The Last Hope." Captain Clubbe was known to have commercial relations with France. It was currently reported that he could speak the language. No one could tell the number of his voyages backward and forward from the Bay to Bristol, to Yarmouth, and even to Bergen, carrying salt-fish to those countries where their religion bids them eat that which they cannot supply from their own waters, and bringing back wine from Bordeaux and brandy from Charente.

It is not etiquette, however, on these wind-swept coasts

to inquire too closely into a man's business, and, as in other places, the talk was mostly among those who knew the least —namely, the women. There had been a question of repairing the church. The generation now slowly finding its way to its precincts had discussed the matter since their childhood and nothing had come of it.

One bold spirit put forth the suggestion that the two gentlemen were London architects sent down by the Queen to see to the church. But the idea fell to the ground before the assurance from Mrs. Clopton's own lips that the old gentleman was nothing but a Frenchman.

Mrs. Clopton kept "The Black Sailor," and knew a deal more than she was ready to tell people; which is tantamount to saying that she was a woman in a thousand. It had leaked out, however, that the spokesman of the party, Mr. Dormer Colville, had asked Mrs. Clopton whether it was true that there was claret in the cellars of "The Black Sailor." And any one having doubts could satisfy himself with a sight of the empty bottles, all mouldy, standing in the back yard of the inn.

They were wine-merchants from France, concluded the wiseacres of Farlingford over their evening beer. They had come to Farlingford to see Captain Clubbe. What could be more natural! For Farlingford was proud of Captain Clubbe. It so often happens that a man going out into the world and making a great name there, forgets his birthplace and the rightful claim to a gleam of reflected glory which the relations of a great man—who have themselves stayed at home and done nothing—are always ready to consider their due reward for having shaken their heads over him during the earlier struggles.

Though slow of tongue, the men of Farlingford were of hospitable inclination. They were sorry for Frenchmen, as

for a race destined to smart for all time under the recollection of many disastrous defeats at sea. And of course they could not help being ridiculous. Heaven had made them like that while depriving them of any hope of ever attaining to good seamanship. Here was a foreigner, however, cast up in their midst, not by the usual channel indeed, but by a carriage and pair from Ipswich. He must feel lonesome, they thought, and strange. They, therefore, made an effort to set him at his ease, and when they met him in "the street" jerked their heads at him sideways. The upward jerk is less friendly and usually denotes the desire to keep strictly within the limits of acquaintanceship. To Mr. Dormer Colville they gave the upward lift of the chin as to a person too facile in speech to be desirable.

The dumbness of the Marquis de Gemosac appealed perhaps to a race of seafaring men very sparingly provided by nature with words in which to clothe thoughts no less solid and sensible by reason of their terseness. It was at all events unanimously decided that everything should be done to make the foreigner welcome until the arrival of "The Last Hope." A similar unanimity characterised the decision that he must without delay be shown Frenchman's grave.

River Andrew's action and the unprecedented display of his Sunday hat on a week-day were nothing but the outcome of a deep-laid scheme. Mrs. Clopton had been instructed to recommend the gentlemen to inspect the church, and the rest had been left to the wit of River Andrew, a man whose calling took him far and wide, and gave him opportunities of speech with gentlefolk.

These opportunities tempted River Andrew to go beyond his instructions so far as to hint that he could, if encouraged, make disclosures of interest respecting Frenchman. Which was untrue ; for River Andrew knew no more than the rest

of Farlingford of a man who, having been literally cast up by the sea at their gates, had lived his life within those gates, had married a Farlingford woman, and had at last gone the way of all Farlingford without telling any who or what he was.

From sundry open cottage doors and well-laden tea-tables glances of inquiry were directed toward the strangers' faces as they walked down the street after having viewed the church. Some prescient females went so far as to state that they could see quite distinctly in the elder gentleman's demeanour a sense of comfort and consolation at the knowledge thus tactfully conveyed to him that he was not the first of his kind to be seen in Farlingford.

Hard upon the heels of the visitors followed River Andrew, wearing his sou'wester now and carrying the news that "The Last Hope" was coming up on the top of the tide.

Farlingford lies four miles from the mouth of the river, and no ship can well arrive unexpected at the quay; for the whole village may see her tacking up under shortened sail, heading all ways, sometimes close-hauled, and now running free as she follows the zigzags of the river.

Thus, from the open door, the villagers calculated the chances of being able to finish the evening meal at leisure and still be down at the quay in time to see Seth Clubbe bring his ship alongside. One by one the men of Farlingford, pipe in mouth, went toward the river, not forgetting the kindly, sideward jerk of the head for the old Frenchman already waiting there.

It was nearly the top of the tide and the clear green water swelled and gurgled round the weedy piles of the quay, bringing on its surface tokens from the sea—shadowy jelly-fish, weed, and froth. "The Last Hope" was quite

close at hand now, swinging up in mid-stream. The sun had set and over the marshes the quiet of evening brooded hazily. Captain Clubbe had taken in all sail except a jib. His anchor was swinging lazily overside, ready to drop. The watchers on the quay could note the gentle rise and fall of the crack little vessel as the tide lifted her from behind. She seemed to be dancing to her home like a maiden back from school. The swing of her tapering masts spoke of the heaving seas she had left behind.

It was characteristic of Farlingford that no one spoke. River Andrew was already in his boat, ready to lend a hand should Captain Clubbe wish to send a rope ashore. But it was obvious that the captain meant to anchor in the stream for the night : so obvious that if any one on shore had mentioned the conclusion his speech would have called for nothing but a contemptuous glance from the steady blue eyes all round him.

It was equally characteristic of a Farlingford ship that there were no greetings from the deck. Those on shore could clearly perceive the burly form of Captain Clubbe, standing by the weather rigging. Wives could distinguish their husbands, and girls their lovers ; but, as these were attending to their business with a taciturn concentration, no hand was raised in salutation.

The wind had dropped now. For these are coasts of quiet nights and boisterous days. The tide was almost slack. "The Last Hope" was scarcely moving, and in the shadowy light looked like a phantom ship sailing out of a dreamy sunset sky.

Suddenly the silence was broken, so unexpectedly, so dramatically, that the old Frenchman, to whose nature such effects would naturally appeal with a lightning speed, rose to his feet and stood looking with startled eyes toward the

ship. A clear strong voice had broken joyously into song, and the words it sang were French :

" C'est le Hasard,
Qui, tôt ou tard,
Ici bas nous seconde ;
Car,
D'un bout du monde
A l'autre bout,
Le Hasard seul fait tout."

Not only were the words incongruous with their quaint, sadly gay air of a dead epoch of music and poetry ; but the voice was in startling contrast to the tones of a gruff and slow-speaking people. For it was a clear tenor voice with a ring of emotion in it, half laughter, half tears, such as no Briton could compass himself, or hear in another without a dumb feeling of shame and shyness.

But those who heard it on the shore—and all Farlingford was there by this time—only laughed curtly. Some of the women exchanged a glance and made imperfectly developed gestures, as of a tolerance understood between mothers for anything that is young and inconsequent.

" We've gotten Loo Barebone back at any rate," said a man, bearing the reputation of a wit. And after a long pause one or two appreciators answered :

" You're right," and laughed good-humouredly.

The Marquis de Gemosac sat down again, with a certain effort at self-control, on the balk of timber which had been used by some generations of tide-watchers. He turned and exchanged a glance with Dormer Colville, who stood at his side leaning on his gold-headed cane. Colville's expression seemed to say :

" I told you what it would be. But wait : there is more to come."

His affable eyes made a round of the watching faces, and even exchanged a sympathetic smile with some, as if to hint that his clothes were only fine because he belonged to a fine generation, but that his heart was as human as any beating under a homelier coat.

"There's Passen," said one woman to another, behind the corner of her apron, within Colville's hearing. "It takes a deal to bring him out o' doors nowadays, and little Sep and—Miss Miriam."

Dormer Colville heard the words. And he heard something unspoken in the pause before the mention of the last name. He did not look at once in the direction indicated by a jerk of the speaker's thumb, but waited until a change of position enabled him to turn his head without undue curiosity. He threw back his shoulders and stretched his legs after the manner of one cramped by standing too long in one attitude.

A hundred yards farther up the river, where the dyke was wider, a grey-haired man was walking slowly toward the quay. In front of him a boy of ten years was endeavouring to drag a young girl toward the jetty at a quicker pace than she desired. She was laughing at his impetuosity and looking back toward the man who followed them with the abstraction and indifference of a student.

Colville took in the whole picture in one quick comprehensive glance. But he turned again as the singer on board "The Last Hope" began another verse. The words were clearly audible to such as knew the language, and Colville noted that the girl turned with a sudden gravity to listen to them.

"Un tel qu'on vantait
Par hasard était
D'origine assez mince;
Par hasard il plut,
Par hasard il fut
Baron, ministre, et prince."

Captain Clubbe's harsh voice broke into the song with the order to let go the anchor. As the ship swung to the tide the steersman, who wore neither coat nor waistcoat, could be seen idly handling the wheel still, though his duties were necessarily at an end. He was a young man, and a gay salutation of his unemployed hand toward the assembled people—as if he were sure that they were all friends—stamped him as the light-hearted singer, so different from the Farlingford men, so strongly contrasted to his hearers, who nevertheless jerked their heads sideways in response. He had, it seemed, rightly gauged the feelings of these cold East Anglians. They were his friends.

River Andrew's boat was alongside "The Last Hope" now. Some one had thrown him a rope, which he had passed under his bow thwart and now held with one hand, while with the other he kept his distance from the tarry side of the ship. There was a pause until the schooner felt her moorings, then Captain Clubbe looked over the side and nodded a curt salutation to River Andrew, bidding him, by the same gesture, wait a minute until he had donned his shore-going jacket. The steersman was pulling on his coat while he sought among the crowd the faces of his more familiar friends. He was, it seemed, a privileged person, and took it for granted that he should go ashore with the captain. He was, perhaps, one of those who seemed to be privileged at their birth by Fate, and pass through life on the sunny side with a light step and laughing lips.

Captain Clubbe was the first to step ashore, with one comprehensive nod of the head for all Farlingford. Close on his heels the younger sailor was already returning the greetings of his friends.

"Hullo, Loo!" they said; or, "How do, Barebone?"

For their tongues are no quicker than their limbs, and to this day, " How do ? " is the usual greeting.

The Marquis de Gemosac, who was sitting in the background, gave a sharp little exclamation of surprise when Barebone stepped ashore, and turned to Dormer Colville to say in an undertone :

" Ah—but you need say nothing."

" I promised you," answered Colville, carelessly, " that I should tell you nothing till you had seen him."

CHAPTER III

THE RETURN OF "THE LAST HOPE"

Not only France, but all Europe, had at this time to reckon with one who, if, as his enemies said, was no Bonaparte, was a very plausible imitation of one.

In 1849 France, indeed, was kind enough to give the world a breathing space. She had herself just come through one of those seething years from which she alone seems to have the power of complete recovery. Paris had been in a state of siege for four months ; not threatened by a foreign foe, but torn to pieces by internal dissension. Sixteen thousand had been killed and wounded in the streets. A ministry had fallen. A ministry always does fall in France. Bad weather may bring about such a descent at any moment. A monarchy had been thrown down—a king had fled. Another king ; and one who should have known better than to put his trust in a people.

Half a dozen generals had attempted to restore order in Paris and confidence in France. Then, at the very end of 1848, the fickle people elected this Napoleon, who was no Bonaparte, President of the new Republic, and Europe was accorded a breathing space. At the beginning of 1849 arrangements were made for it—military arrangements—and the year was almost quiet.

It was in the summer of the next year, 1850, that the

Marquis de Gemosac journeyed to England. It was not his first visit to the country. Sixty years earlier he had been hurried thither by a frenzied mother, a little pale-faced boy, not bright or clever, but destined to pass through days of trial and years of sorrow which the bright and clever would scarcely have survived. For brightness must always mean friction, while cleverness will continue to butt its head against human limitations so long as men shall walk this earth.

He had been induced to make this journey thus, in the evening of his days, by the Hope, hitherto vain enough, which many Frenchmen had pursued for half a century. For he was one of those who refused to believe that Louis XVII. had died in the prison of the Temple.

Not once, but many times, Dormer Colville laughingly denied any responsibility in the matter.

"I will not even tell the story as it was told to me," he said to the Marquis de Gemosac, to the Abbé Touvent and to the Comtesse de Chantonnay, whom he met frequently enough at the house of his cousin, Mrs. St. Pierre Lawrence, in that which is now the Province of the Charente Inférieure. "I will not even tell you the story as it was told to me, until one of you has seen the man. And then, if you ask me, I will tell you. It is nothing to me, you understand. I am no dreamer, but a very material person, who lives in France because he loves the sunshine, and the cuisine, and the good, kind hearts, which no government or want of government can deteriorate."

And Madame de Chantonnay, who liked Dormer Colville —with whom she admitted she always felt herself in sympathy—smiled graciously in response to his gallant bow. For she, too, was a materialist who loved the sunshine and the cuisine; more especially the cuisine.

Moreover, Colville never persuaded the Marquis de Gemosac to come to England. He went so far as to represent, in a realistic light, the discomforts of the journey, and only at the earnest desire of many persons concerned did he at length enter into the matter and good-naturedly undertake to accompany the aged traveller.

So far as his story was concerned, he kept his word, entertaining the Marquis on the journey and during their two days' sojourn at the humble inn at Farlingford with that flow of sympathetic and easy conversation which always made Madame de Chantonnay protest that he was no Englishman at all, but all that there was of the most French. Has it not been seen that Colville refused to translate the dark sayings of River Andrew by the side of the grass-grown grave, which seemed to have been brought to the notice of the travellers by the merest accident?

"I promised you that I should tell you nothing until you had seen him," he repeated, as the Marquis followed with his eyes the movements of the group of which the man they called Loo Barebone formed the centre.

No one took much notice of the two strangers. It is not considered good manners in a seafaring community to appear to notice a new-comer. Captain Clubbe was naturally the object of universal attention. Was he not bringing foreign money into Farlingford, where the local purses needed replenishing now that trade had fallen away and agriculture was so sorely hampered by the lack of roads across the marsh?

Clubbe pushed his way through the crowd to shake hands with the Rev. Septimus Marvin, who seemed to emerge from a visionary world of his own in order to perform that ceremony and to return thither on its completion.

Then the majority of the onlookers straggled homeward, leaving a few wives and sweethearts waiting by the steps, with patient eyes fixed on the spidery figures in the rigging of "The Last Hope." Dormer Colville and the Marquis de Gemosac were left alone, while the rector stood a few yards away, glaring abstractedly at them through his gold-rimmed spectacles as if they had been some strange flotsam cast up by the high tide.

"I remember," said Colville to his companion, "that I have an introduction to the pastor of the village, who, if I am not mistaken, is even now contemplating opening a conversation. It was given to me by my banker in Paris, who is a Suffolk man. You remember, Marquis, John Turner, of the Rue Lafayette?"

"Yes—yes," answered the Marquis, absently. He was still watching the retreating villagers, with eyes old and veiled by the trouble that they had seen.

"I will take this opportunity of presenting myself," said Colville, who was watching the little group from the rectory without appearing to do so. He rose as he spoke and went toward the clergyman, who was probably much younger than he looked. For he was ill-dressed and ill-shorn, with straggling grey hair hanging to his collar. He had a musty look, such as a book may have that is laid on a shelf in a deserted room and never opened or read. Septimus Marvin, the world would say, had been laid upon a shelf when he was inducted to the spiritual cure of Farlingford. But no man is ever laid on a shelf by Fate. He climbs up there of his own will, and lies down beneath the dust of forgetfulness because he lacks the heart to arise and face the business of life.

Seeing that Dormer Colville was approaching him, he came forward with a certain scholarly ease of manner as

if he had once mixed with the best on an intellectual equality.

Colville's manners were considered perfect, especially by those who were unable to detect a fine line said to exist between ease and too much ease. Mr. Marvin recollected John Turner well. Ten years earlier he had, indeed, corresponded at some length with the Paris banker respecting a valuable engraving. Was Mr. Colville interested in engravings? Colville confessed to a deep and abiding pleasure in this branch of art, tempered, he admitted with a laugh, by a colossal ignorance. He then proceeded to give the lie to his own modesty by talking easily and well of mezzotints and etchings.

"But," he said, interrupting himself with evident reluctance, "I am forgetting my obligations. Let me present to you my companion, an old friend, the Marquis de Gemosac."

The two gentlemen bowed, and Mr. Marvin, knowing no French, proceeded to address the stranger in good British Latin, after the manner of the courtly divines of his day. Which Latin, from its mode of pronunciation, was entirely unintelligible to its hearer.

In return, the rector introduced the two strangers to his niece, Miriam Liston.

"The mainstay of my quiet house," he added, with his vague and dreamy smile.

"I have already heard of you," said Dormer Colville at once, with his modest deference, "from my cousin, Mrs. St. Pierre Lawrence."

He seemed, as sailors say, never to be at a loose end; but to go through life with a facile readiness, having, as it were, his hands full of threads among which to select, with a careless affability, one that must draw him nearer to high and low, men and women, alike.

They talked together for some minutes, and, soon after the discovery that Mariam Liston was as good a French scholar as himself, and therefore able to converse with the Marquis de Gemosac, Colville regretted that it was time for them to return to their simple evening meal at "The Black Sailor."

"Well," said Colville to Monsieur de Gemosac, as they walked slowly across the green toward the inn, embowered in its simple cottage-garden, all ablaze now with hollyhocks and poppies—"well, after your glimpse at this man, Marquis, are you desirous to see more of him?"

"My friend," answered the Frenchman, with a quick gesture, descriptive of a sudden emotion not yet stilled, "he took my breath away. I can think of nothing else. My poor brain is buzzing still, and I know not what answers I made to that pretty English girl. Ah! You smile at my enthusiasm; you do not know what it is to have a great hope dangling before the eyes all one's life. And that face —that face!"

In which judgment the Marquis was no doubt right. For Dormer Colville was too universal a man to be capable of concentrated zeal upon any one object. He laughed at the accusation.

"After dinner," he answered, "I will tell you the little story as it was told to me. We can sit on this seat, outside the inn, in the scent of the flowers and smoke our cigarette."

To which proposal Monsieur de Gemosac assented readily enough. For he was an old man, and to such the importance of small things, such as dinner or a passing personal comfort, are apt to be paramount. Moreover, he was a remnant of that class to which France owed her downfall among the nations; a class represented faithfully enough by its King,

Louis XVI., who procrastinated even on the steps of the guillotine.

The wind went down with the sun, as had been foretold by River Andrew, and the quiet of twilight lay on the level landscape like sleep when the two travellers returned to the seat at the inn door. A distant curlew was whistling cautiously to its benighted mate, but all other sounds were still. The day was over.

"You remember," said Colville to his companion, "that six months after the execution of the King, a report ran through Paris and all France that the Dillons had succeeded in rescuing the Dauphin from the Temple."

"That was in July, 1793 — just fifty-seven years ago---the news reached me in Austria," answered the Marquis.

Colville glanced sideways at his companion, whose face was set with a stubbornness almost worthy of the tenacious Bourbons themselves.

"The Queen was alive then," went on the Englishman, half diffidently, as if prepared for amendment or correction. "She had nearly three months to live. The separation from her children had only just been carried out. She was not broken by it yet. She was in full possession of her health and energy. She was one of the cleverest women of that time. She was surrounded by men, some of whom were frankly half-witted, others who were drunk with excess of a sudden power for which they had had no preparation. Others, again, were timorous or cunning. All were ignorant, and many had received no education at all. For there are many ignorant people who have been highly educated, Marquis."

He gave a short laugh and lighted a cigarette.

"Mind," he continued, after a pause devoted to reflection

which appeared to be neither deep nor painful, for he smiled as he gazed across the hazy marshes, "mind, I am no enthusiast, as you yourself have observed. I plead no cause. She was not my Queen, Marquis, and France is not my country. I endeavour to look at the matter with the eye of common-sense and wisdom. And I cannot forget that Marie Antoinette was at bay: all her senses, all her wit alert. She can only have thought of her children. Human nature would dictate such thoughts. One cannot forget that she had devoted friends, and that these friends possessed unlimited money. Do you think, Marquis, that any one man of that rabble was above the reach—of money?"

And Mr. Dormer Colville's reflective smile, as he gazed at the distant sea, would seem to indicate that, after a considerable experience of men and women, he had reluctantly arrived at a certain conclusion respecting them.

"No man born of woman, Marquis, is proof against bribery or flattery—or both."

"One can believe anything that is bad of such dregs of human-kind, my friend," said Monsieur de Gemosac, contemptuously.

"I speak to one," continued Colville, "who has given the attention of a lifetime to the subject. If I am wrong, correct me. What I have been told is that a man was found who was ready, in return for a certain sum paid down, to substitute his own son for the little Dauphin—to allow his son to take the chance of coming alive out of that predicament. One can imagine that such a man could be found in France at that period."

Monsieur de Gemosac turned, and looked at his companion with a sort of surprise.

"You speak as if in doubt, Monsieur Colville," he said, with a sudden assumption of that grand manner with which

his father had faced the people on the Place de la Révolution —had taken a pinch of snuff in the shadow of the guillotine one sunny July day. "You speak as if in doubt. Such a man was found. I have spoken with him : I, who speak to you."

CHAPTER IV

THE MARQUIS'S CREED

DORMER COLVILLE smiled doubtfully. He was too polite, it seemed, to be sceptical, and by his attitude expressed a readiness to be convinced as much from indifference as by reasoning.

"It is intolerable," said the Marquis de Gemosac, "that a man of your understanding should be misled by a few romantic writers in the pay of the Orleans."

"I am not misled, Marquis; I am ignorant," laughed Colville. "It is not always the same thing."

Monsieur de Gemosac threw away his cigarette and turned eagerly toward his companion.

"Listen," he said. "I can convince you in a few words."

And Colville leaned back against the weather-worn seat with the air of one prepared to give a post-prandial attention.

"Such a man was found as you yourself suggest. A boy was found who could not refuse to run that great risk, who could not betray himself by indiscreet speech—because he was dumb. In order to allay certain rumours which were going the round of Europe, the National Convention sent three of its members to visit the Dauphin in prison, and they themselves have left a record that he answered none of their questions and spoke no word to them. Why? Because

he was dumb. He merely sat and looked at them solemnly, as the dumb look. It was not the Dauphin at all. He was hidden in the loft above. The visit of the Conventionals was not satisfactory. The rumours were not stilled by it. There is nothing so elusive or so vital as a rumour. Ah! you smile, my friend."

"I always give a careful attention to rumours," admitted Colville. "More careful than that which one accords to official announcements."

"Well, the dumb boy was not satisfactory. Those who were paid for this affair began to be alarmed. Not for their pockets. There was plenty of money. Half the crowned heads in Europe, and all the women, were ready to open their purses for the sake of a little boy, whose ill-treatment appealed to their soft hearts: who in a sense was sacred, for he was descended from sixty-six kings. No! Barras and all the other scoundrels began to perceive that there was only one way out of the difficulty into which they had blundered. The Dauphin must die! So the dumb boy disappeared. One wonders whither he went and what his fate might be——"

"With so much to tell," put in Dormer Colville, musingly; "so much unspoken."

It was odd how the *rôles* had been reversed. For the Marquis de Gemosac was now eagerly seeking to convince his companion. The surest way to persuade a man is to lead him to persuade himself.

"The only solution was for the Dauphin to die—in public. So another substitution was effected," continued Monsieur de Gemosac. "A dying boy from the hospital was made to play the part of the Dauphin. He was not at all like him; for he was tall and dark—taller and darker than a son of Louis XVI. and Marie Antoinette could ever

have been. The prison was reconstructed so that the sentry on guard could not see his prisoner, but was forced to call to him in order to make sure that he was there. It was a pity that he did not resemble the Dauphin at all, this scrofulous child. But they were in a hurry, and they were at their wits' ends. And it is not always easy to find a boy who will die in a given time. This boy had to die, however, by some means or other. It was for France, you understand, and the safety of the Great Republic."

"One hopes that he appreciated his privilege," observed Colville, philosophically.

"And he must die in public, duly certified for by persons of undoubted integrity. They called in, at the last moment, Desault, a great doctor of that day. But Desault was, unfortunately, honest. He went home and told his assistant that this was not the Dauphin, and that, whoever he might be, he was being poisoned. The assistant's name was Choppart, and this Choppart made up a medicine, on Desault's prescription, which was an antidote to poison."

Monsieur de Gemosac paused, and, turning to his companion, held up one finger to command his full attention.

"Desault died, my friend, four days later, and Choppart died five days after him, and the boy in the Temple died three days after Choppart. And no one knows what they died of. They were pretty bunglers, those gentlemen of the Republic! Of course, they called in others in a hurry; men better suited to their purpose. And one of these, the citizen Pelletan, has placed on record some preposterous lies. These doctors certified that this was the Dauphin. They had never seen him before, but what matter? Great care was taken to identify the body. Persons of position, who had never seen the son of Louis XVI., were invited to visit the Temple. Several of them had the temerity to protect

themselves in the certificate. 'We saw what we were informed was the body of the Dauphin,' they said."

Again the old man turned, and held up his hand in a gesture of warning.

"If they wanted a witness whose testimony was without question—whose word would have laid the whole question in that lost and forgotten grave for ever—they had one in the room above. For the Dauphin's sister was there, Marie Thérèse Charlotte, she who is now Duchess of Angoulême. Why did they not bring her down to see the body, to testify that her brother was dead and the line of Louis XVI. ended? Was it chivalry? I ask you if these had shown chivalry to Madame de Lamballe? to Madame Elizabeth? to Marie Antoinette? Was it kindness toward a child of unparalleled misfortune? I ask you if they had been kind to those whom they called the children of the tyrant? No! They did not conduct her to that bedside, because he who lay there was not her brother. Are we children, Monsieur, to be deceived by a tale of a sudden softness of heart? They wished to spare this child the pain! Had they ever spared any one pain—the National Assembly?"

And the Marquis de Gemosac's laugh rang with a hatred which must, it seems, outlive the possibility of revenge.

"There was to be a public funeral. Such a ceremony would have been of incalculable value at that time. But, at the last minute, their courage failed them. The boy was thrown into a forgotten corner of a Paris churchyard, at nine o'clock one night, without witnesses. The spot itself cannot now be identified. Do you tell me that that was the Dauphin? Bah! my friend, the thing was too childish!"

"The ignorant and the unlettered," observed Colville, with the air of making a concession, "are always at a disadvantage—even in crime."

"That the Dauphin was, in the mean time, concealed in the garret of the Tower appears to be certain. That he was finally conveyed out of the prison in a clothes-basket is as certain, Monsieur, as it is certain that the sun will rise to-morrow. And I believe that the Queen knew, when she went to the guillotine, that her son was no longer in the Temple. I believe that Heaven sent her that one scrap of comfort, tempered as it was by the knowledge that her daughter remained a prisoner in their hands. But it was to her son that her affections were given. For the Duchess never had the gift of winning love. As she is now—a cold, hard, composed woman—so she was in her prison in the Temple at the age of fifteen. You may take it from one who has known her all his life. And from that moment to this——"

The Marquis paused, and made a gesture with his hands, descriptive of space and the unknown.

"From that moment to this—nothing. Nothing of the Dauphin."

He turned in his seat and looked questioningly up toward the crumbling church, with its square tower, stricken, years ago, by lightning; with its grass-grown graveyard marked by stones all grey and hoary with immense age and the passage of cold and stormy winters.

"Who knows," he added, "what may have become of him? Who can say where he lies? For a life begun as his began was not likely to be a long one. Though troubles do not kill. Witness myself, who am five years his senior."

Colville looked at him in obedience to an inviting gesture of the hand; looked as at something he did not understand, something beyond his understanding, perhaps. For the troubles had not been Monsieur de Gemosac's own troubles, but those of his country.

"And the Duchess?" said the Englishman at length, after a pause, "at Frohsdorf—what does she say—or think?"

"She says nothing," replied the Marquis de Gemosac, sharply. "She is silent, because the world is listening for every word she may utter. What she thinks. . . . Ah! who knows? She is an old woman, my friend, for she is seventy-one. Her memories are a millstone about her neck. No wonder she is silent. Think what her life has been. As a child, three years of semi-captivity at the Tuileries, with the mob howling round the railings. Three and a half years a prisoner in the Temple. Both parents sent to the guillotine—her aunt to the same. All her world—massacred. As a girl, she was collected, majestic; or else she could not have survived those years in the Temple, alone—the last of her family. What must her thoughts have been, at night in her prison? As a woman, she is cold, sad, unemotional. No one ever lived through such troubles with so little display of feeling. The Restoration, the Hundred Days, the second Restoration, Louis XVIII., and his flight to England; Charles X. and his abdication; her own husband, the Duc d'Angoulême—the Dauphin for many years, the King for half an hour—these are some of her experiences. She has lived for forty years in exile in Mittau, Memel, Warsaw, Königsberg, Prague, England; and now she is at Frohsdorf, awaiting the end. You ask me what she says? She says nothing, but she knows—she has always known—that her brother did not die in the Temple."

"Then——" suggested Colville, who certainly had acquired the French art of putting much meaning into one word.

"Then why not seek him? you would ask. How do you know that she has not done so, my friend, with tears?

But as years passed on, and brought no word of him, it became less and less desirable. While Louis XVIII. continued to reign there was no reason to wish to find Louis XVII., you understand. For there was still a Bourbon, of the direct line, upon the throne. Louis XVIII. would scarcely desire it. One would not expect him to seek very diligently for one who would deprive him of the crown. Charles X., knowing he must succeed his brother, was no more enthusiastic in the search. And the Duchess d'Angoulême herself, you ask? I can see the question in your face."

"Yet," conceded Colville. "For, after all, he was her brother."

"Yes—and if she found him, what would be the result? Her uncle would be driven from the throne; her father-in-law would not inherit; her own husband, the Dauphin, would be Dauphin no longer. She herself could never be Queen of France. It is a hard thing to say of a woman——"

Monsieur de Gemosac paused for a moment in reflection.

"Yes," he said at length, "a hard thing. But this is a hard world, Monsieur Colville, and will not allow either men or women to be angels. I have known and served the Duchess all my life, and I confess that she has never lost sight of the fact that, should Louis XVII. be found, she herself would never be Queen of France. One is not a Bourbon for nothing."

"One is not a stateswoman and a daughter of kings for nothing," amended Colville, with his tolerant laugh; for he was always ready to make allowances. "Better, perhaps, that France should be left quiet, under the *régime* she had accepted, than disturbed by the offer of another *régime*, which might be less acceptable. You always remind me—you, who deal with France—of a lion-tamer at a circus. You have a very slight control over your performing beasts.

If they refuse to do the trick you propose, you do not press it, but pass on to another trick; and the bars of the cage always appear to the onlooker to be very inadequate. Perhaps it was better, Marquis, to let the Dauphin go; to pass him over, and proceed to the tricks suitable to the momentary humour of your wild animals."

The Marquis de Gemosac gave a curt laugh, which thrilled with a note of that fearful joy known to those who seek to control the uncontrollable.

"At that time," he admitted, "it might be so. But not now. At that time there lived Louis XVIII. and Charles X., and his sons, the Duc d'Angoulême and the Duc de Berri, who might reasonably be expected to have sons in their turn. There were plenty of Bourbons, it seemed. And now—where are they? What is left of them?"

He gave a nod of the head toward the sea that lay between him and Germany.

"One old woman, over there, at Frohsdorf, the daughter of Marie Antoinette, awaiting the end of her bitter pilgrimage—and this Comte de Chambord. This man who will not when he may. No, my friend, it has never been so necessary to find Louis XVII. as it is now. Necessary for France—for the whole world. This Prince President, this last offshoot of a pernicious republican growth, will drag us all in the mud if he gets his way with France. And those who have watched with seeing eyes have always known that such a time as the present must eventually come. For France will always be the victim of a clever adventurer. We have foreseen it, and for that reason we have treated as serious possibilities these false Dauphins who have sprung up like mushrooms all over Europe and even in America. And what have they proved? What have the Bourbons proved in frustrating their frauds? That the son of Louis XVI.

did not die in the Temple. That is all. And Madame herself has gathered further strength to her conviction that the little King was not buried in that forgotten corner of the graveyard of Sainte Marguérite. At the same time, she knows that none of these—neither Naundorff, nor Havergault, nor Bruneau, nor de Richemont, nor any other pretender—was her brother. No! The King, either because he did not know he was King, or because he had had enough of royalty, never came forward and never betrayed his whereabouts. He was to be sought; he is still to be sought. And it is now that he is wanted."

"That is why I offer to tell you this story now. That is my reason for bringing you to Farlingford now," said Colville, quietly. It seemed that he must have awaited, as the wise do in this world, the propitious moment, and should it never come they are content to forego their purpose. He gave a light laugh and stretched out his long legs, contemplating his strapped trousers and neat boots with the eye of a connoisseur. "And should I be the humble means of doing a good turn to France and others, will France—and others—remember it, I wonder. Perhaps I hold in my hands the Hope of France, Marquis."

He paused, and lapsed for a moment into thought. It was eight o'clock, and the long northern twilight was fading into darkness now. The bell of Captain Clubbe's ship rang out the hour—a new sound in the stillness of this forgotten town.

"The Last Hope," added Dormer Colville, with a queer laugh.

CHAPTER V

ON THE DYKE

Neither had spoken again when their thoughts were turned aside from that story which Colville, instead of telling, had been called upon to hear.

For the man whose story it presumably was passed across the green ere the sound of the ship's bell had died away. He had changed his clothes, or else it would have appeared that he was returning to his ship. He walked with his head thrown up, with long lithe steps, with a gait and carriage so unlike the heavy tread of men wearing sea-boots all their working days, that none would have believed him to be born and bred in Farlingford. For it is not only in books that history is written, but in the turn of a head, in the sound of a voice, in the vague and dreamy thoughts half formulated by the human mind 'twixt sleeping and waking.

Monsieur de Gemosac paused, with his cigarette held poised halfway to his lips, and watched the man go past, while Dormer Colville, leaning back against the wall, scanned him sideways between lowered lids.

It would seem that Barebone must have an appointment. He walked without looking about him, like one who is late. He rather avoided than sought the greeting of a friend from the open cottage-doors as he passed on. On reaching the

quay he turned quickly to the left, following the path that led toward the dyke at the riverside.

"He is no sailor at heart," commented Colville. "He never even glanced at his ship."

"And yet it was he who steered the ship in that dangerous river."

"He may be skilful in anything he undertakes," suggested Colville, in explanation. "It is Captain Clubbe who will tell us that. For Captain Clubbe has known him since his birth, and was the friend of his father."

They sat in silence watching the shadowy figure on the dyke, outlined dimly against the hazy horizon. He was walking, still with haste as if to a certain destination, toward the rectory buried in its half circle of crouching trees. And already another shadow was hurrying from the house to meet him. It was the boy, little Sep Marvin, and in the stillness of the evening his shrill voice could be heard in excited greeting.

"What have you brought? What have you brought?" he was crying, as he ran toward Barebone. They seemed to have so much to say to each other that they could not wait until they came within speaking distance. The boy took Barebone's hand, and turning walked back with him to the old house peeping over the dyke toward the sea. He could scarcely walk quietly, for joy at the return of his friend, and skipped from side to side, pouring out questions and answering them himself as children and women do.

But Barebone gave him only half of his attention and looked before him with grave eyes, while the boy talked of nests and knives. Barebone was looking toward the garden, concealed like an intrenchment behind the dyke. It was a quiet evening, and the rector was walking slowly backward and forward on the raised path, made on the dyke itself, like

a ship-captain on his quarter-deck, with hands clasped behind his bent back and eyes that swept the horizon at each turn with a mechanical monotony. At one end of the path, which was worn smooth by the Reverend Septimus Marvin's pensive foot, the gleam of a white dress betrayed the presence of his niece, Miriam Liston.

"Ah, is that you?" asked the rector, holding out a limp hand. "Yes. I remember Sep was allowed to sit up till half-past eight in the hope that you might come round to see us. Well, Loo, and how are you? Yes—yes."

And he looked vaguely out to sea, repeating below his breath the words "Yes—yes" almost in a whisper, as if communing secretly with his own thoughts out of hearing of the world.

"Of course I should come round to see you," answered Barebone. "Where else should I go? So soon as we had had tea and I could change my clothes and get away from that dear Mrs. Clubbe. It seems so strange to come back here from the racketing world—and France is a racketing world of its own—and find everything in Farlingford just the same."

He had shaken hands with the rector and with Miriam Liston as he spoke, and his speech was not the speech of Farlingford men at all, but rather of Septimus Marvin himself, of whose voice he had acquired the ring of education, while adding to it a neatness and quickness of enunciation which must have been his own; for none in Suffolk could have taught it to him.

"Just the same," he repeated, glancing at the book Miriam had laid aside for a moment to greet him and had now taken up again. "That book must be very large print," he said, "for you to be able to read by this light."

"It is large print," answered the girl, with a friendly laugh, as she returned to it.

"And you are still resolved to be a sailor?" inquired Marvin, looking at him with kind eyes for ever asleep, it would appear, in some long slumber which must have been the death of one of the sources of human energy—of ambition or of hope.

"Until I find a better calling," answered Loo Barebone, with his eager laugh. "When I am away I wonder how any can be content to live in Farlingford and let the world go by. And when I am here I wonder how any can be so foolish as to fret and fume in the restless world while he might be sitting quietly at Farlingford."

"Ah," murmured the rector, musingly, "you are for the world. You, with your capacities, your quickness for learning, your—well, your lightness of heart, my dear Loo. That goes far in the great world. To be light of heart—to amuse. Yes, you are for the world. You might do something there."

"And nothing in Farlingford?" inquired Barebone, gaily; but he turned, as he spoke, and glanced once more at Miriam Liston as if in some dim way the question could not be answered by any other. She was absorbed in her book again. The print must indeed have been large and clear, for the twilight was fading fast.

She looked up and met his glance with direct and steady eyes of a clear grey. A severe critic of that which none can satisfactorily define—a woman's beauty—would have objected that her face was too wide, and her chin too square. Her hair, which was of a bright brown, grew with a singular strength and crispness round a brow which was serene and square. In her eyes there shone the light of tenacity, and a steady purpose. A student of human nature must have regretted that the soul looking out of such eyes should have

been vouchsafed to a woman. For strength and purpose in a man are usually exercised for the good of mankind, while in a woman such qualities must, it would seem, benefit no more than one man of her own generation, and a few who may follow her in the next.

"There is nothing," she said, turning to her book again, "for a man to do in Farlingford."

"And for a woman——?" inquired Barebone, without looking at her.

"There is always something—everywhere."

And Septimus Marvin's reflective "Yes—yes," as he paused in his walk and looked seaward, came in appropriately as a grave confirmation of Miriam's jesting statement.

"Yes—yes," he repeated, turning toward Barebone, who stood listening to the boy's chatter. "You find us as you left us, Loo. Was it six months ago? Ah! How time flies when one remains stationary. For you, I dare say, it seems more."

"For me—oh yes, it seems more," replied Barebone, with his gay laugh, and a glance toward Miriam.

"A little older," continued the rector. "The church a little mouldier. Farlingford a little emptier. Old Godbold is gone—the last of the Godbolds of Farlingford, which means another empty cottage in the street."

"I saw it as I came down," answered Barebone. "They look like last year's nests—those empty cottages. But you have been all well, here at the rectory, since we sailed? The cottages—well, they are only cottages after all."

Miriam's eyes were raised for a moment from her book.

"Is it like that they talk in France?" she asked. "Are those the sentiments of the great republic?"

Barebone laughed aloud.

"I thought I could make you look up from your book,"

he answered. "One has merely to cast a slur upon the poor —your dear poor of Farlingford—and you are up in arms in an instant. But I am not the person to cast a slur, since I am one of the poor of Farlingford myself, and owe it to charity—to the charity of the rectory—that I can read and write."

"But it came to you very naturally," observed Marvin, looking vaguely across the marshes to the roofs of the village, "to suggest that those who live in cottages are of a different race of beings—— "

He broke off, following his own thoughts in silence, as men soon learn to do who have had no companion by them capable of following whithersoever they may lead.

"Did it?" asked Barebone, sharply. He turned to look at his old friend and mentor with a sudden quick distress. "I hope not. I hope it did not sound like that. For you have never taught me such thoughts, have you? Quite the contrary. And I cannot have learned it from Clubbe."

He broke off with a laugh of relief, for he had perceived that Septimus Marvin's thoughts were already elsewhere.

"Perhaps you are right," he added, turning to Miriam. "It may be that one should go to a republic in order to learn—once for all—that all men are not equal."

"You say it with so much conviction," was the retort, "that you must have known it before."

"But I do not know it. I deny such knowledge. Where could I have learned such a principle?"

He spread out his arms in emphatic denial. For he was quick in all his gestures—quick to laugh or be grave —quick, with the rapidity of a woman to catch a thought held back by silence or concealed in speech.

Marvin merely looked at him with a dreamy smile and lapsed again into those speculations which filled his waking

moments; for the business of life never received his full attention. He contemplated the world from afar off, and was like that blind man at Bethsaida who saw men as trees walking, and rubbed his eyes and wondered. He turned at the sound of the church clock and looked at his son, whose attitude towards Barebone was that of an admiring younger brother.

"Sep," he said, "your extra half-hour has passed. You will have time to-morrow and for many days to come to exchange views with Loo."

The boy was old before his time, as the children of elderly parents always are.

"Very well," he said, with a grave nod. "But you must not tell Loo where those young herons are after I am gone to bed."

He went slowly toward the house, looking back suspiciously from time to time.

"Herons? no. Why should I? Where are they?" muttered Mr. Marvin, vaguely, and he absent-mindedly followed his son, leaving Miriam Liston sitting in the turf shelter, built like an embrasure in the dyke, and Barebone standing a little distance from her, looking at her.

A silence fell upon them—the silence that follows the departure of a third person when those who are left behind turn a new page. Miriam laid her book upon her lap and looked across the river now slowly turning to its ebb. She did not look at Barebone, but her eyes were conscious of his proximity. Her attitude, like his, seemed to indicate the knowledge that this moment had been inevitable from the first, and that there was no desire on either part to avoid it or to hasten its advent.

"I had a haunting fear as we came up the river," he said at length, quietly and with an odd courtesy of manner,

"that you might have gone away. That is the calamity always hanging over this quiet house."

He spoke with the ease of manner which always indicates a long friendship, or a close *camaraderie*, resulting from common interests or a common endeavour.

"Why should I go away?" she asked.

"On the other hand, why should you stay?"

"Because I fancy I am wanted," she replied, in the lighter tone which he had used. "It is gratifying to one's vanity, you know, whether it be true or not."

"Oh, it is true enough. One cannot imagine what they would do without you."

He was watching Septimus Marvin as he spoke. Sep had joined him and was walking gravely by his side toward the house. They were ill-assorted.

"But there is a limit even to self-sacrifice and—well, there is another world open to you."

She gave a curt laugh as if he had touched a topic upon which they would disagree.

"Oh—yes," he laughed. "I leave myself open to a *tu quoque*, I know. There are other worlds open to me also, you would say."

He looked at her with his gay and easy smile; but she made no answer, and her resolute lips closed together sharply. The subject had been closed by some past conversation or incident which had left a memory.

"Who are those two men staying at 'The Black Sailor?'" she asked, changing the subject, or only turning into a by-way, perhaps. "You saw them."

She seemed to take it for granted that he should have seen them, though he had not appeared to look in their direction.

"Oh—yes. I saw them, but I do not know who they are. I came straight here as soon as I could."

"One of them is a Frenchman," she said, taking no heed of the excuse given for his ignorance of Farlingford news.

"The old man—I thought so. I felt it when I looked at him. It was perhaps a fellow feeling. I suppose I am a Frenchman after all. Clubbe always says I am one when I am at the wheel and let the ship go off the wind."

Miriam was looking along the dyke, peering into the gathering darkness.

"One of them is coming toward us now," she said, almost warningly. "Not the Marquis de Gemosac, but the other—the Englishman."

"Confound him," muttered Barebone. "What does he want?"

And to judge from Mr. Dormer Colville's pace it would appear that he chiefly desired to interrupt their *tête-à-tête*.

CHAPTER VI

THE STORY OF THE CASTAWAYS

When River Andrew stated that there were few at Farlingford who knew more of Frenchman than himself, it is to be presumed that he spoke by the letter, and under the reserve that Captain Clubbe was not at the moment on shore.

For Captain Clubbe had known Frenchman since boyhood.

"I understand," said Dormer Colville to him two or three days after the arrival of "The Last Hope," "that the Marquis de Gemosac cannot do better than apply to you for some information he desires to possess. In fact, it is on that account that we are here."

The introduction had been a matter requiring patience. For Captain Clubbe had not laid aside in his travels a certain East Anglian distrust of the unknown. He had, of course, noted the presence of the strangers when he landed at Farlingford quay, but his large, immobile face had betrayed no peculiar interest. There had been plenty to tell him all that was known of Monsieur de Gemosac and Dormer Colville, and a good deal that was only surmised. But the imagination of even the darksome River Andrew failed to soar successfully under the measuring blue eye, and the total lack of comment of Captain Clubbe.

There was, indeed, little to tell, although the strangers had been seen to go to the rectory in quite a friendly way, and had taken a glass of sherry in the rector's study. Mrs. Clacy was responsible for this piece of news, and her profession giving her the *entrée* to almost every back door in Farlingford enabled her to gather news at the fountain-head. For Mrs. Clacy went out to oblige. She obliged the rectory on Mondays, and Mrs. Clubbe, with what was technically described as the heavy wash, on Tuesdays. Whatever Mrs. Clacy was asked to do she could perform with a rough efficiency. But she always undertook it with reluctance. It was not, she took care to mention, what she was accustomed to, but she would do it to oblige. Her charge was eighteenpence a day with her dinner, and (she made the addition with a raised eyebrow, and the resigned sigh of one who takes her meals as a duty toward those dependent on her) a bit of tea at the end of the day.

It was on a Wednesday that Dormer Colville met Captain Clubbe face to face in the street, and was forced to curb his friendly smile and half-formed nod of salutation. For Captain Clubbe went past him with a rigid face and steadily averted eyes, like a walking monument. For there was something in the captain's deportment dimly suggestive of stone, and the dignity of stillness. His face meant security, his large limbs a slow, sure action.

Colville and Monsieur de Gemosac were on the quay in the afternoon at high tide when "The Last Hope" was warped on to the slip-way. All Farlingford was there too, and Captain Clubbe carried out the difficult task with hardly any words at all from a corner of the jetty, with Loo Barebone on board as second in command.

Captain Clubbe could not fail to perceive the strangers, for they stood a few yards from him, Monsieur de Gemosac

peering with his yellow eyes toward the deck of "The Last Hope," where Barebone stood on the forecastle giving the orders transmitted to him by a sign from his taciturn captain. Colville seemed to take a greater interest in the proceedings, and noted the skill and precision of the crew with the air of a seaman.

Presently, Septimus Marvin wandered down the dyke and stood irresolutely at the far corner of the jetty. He always approached his flock with diffidence, although they treated him kindly enough, much as they treated such of their own children as were handicapped in the race of life by some malformation or mental incapacity.

Colville approached him and they stood side by side until "The Last Hope" was safely moored and chocked. Then it was that the rector introduced the two strangers to Captain Clubbe. It being a Wednesday, Clubbe must have known all that there was to know, and more, of Monsieur de Gemosac and Dormer Colville ; for Mrs. Clacy, it will be remembered, obliged Mrs. Clubbe on Tuesdays. Nothing, however, in the mask-like face, large and square, of the ship-captain indicated that he knew aught of his new acquaintances, or desired to know more. And when Colville frankly explained their presence in Farlingford, Captain Clubbe nodded gravely and that was all.

"We can wait, however, until a more suitable opportunity presents itself," Colville hastened to add. "You are busy, as even a landsman can perceive, and cannot be expected to think of anything but your vessel until the tide leaves her high and dry."

He turned and explained the situation to the Marquis, who shrugged his shoulders impatiently as if at the delay. For he was a southerner, and was, perhaps, ignorant of the fact that in dealing with any born on the shores of the

German Ocean nothing is gained and, more often than not, all is lost by haste.

"You hear," Colville added, turning to the Captain, and speaking in a curter manner; for so strongly was he moved by that human kindness which is vaguely called sympathy that his speech varied according to his listener. "You hear the Marquis only speaks French. It is about a fellow-countryman of his buried here. Drop in and have a glass of wine with us some evening; to-night, if you are at liberty."

"What I can tell you won't take long," said Clubbe, over his shoulder; for the tide was turning, and in a few minutes would be ebbing fast.

"Dare say not. But we have a good bin of claret at 'The Black Sailor,' and shall be glad of your opinion on it."

Clubbe nodded, with a curt laugh, which might have been intended to deprecate the possession of any opinion on a vintage, or to express his disbelief that Dormer Colville desired to have it.

Nevertheless, his large person loomed in the dusk of the trees soon after sunset, in the narrow road leading from his house to the church and the green.

Monsieur de Gemosac and his companion were sitting on the bench outside the inn, leaning against the sill of their own parlour-window, which stood open. The Captain had changed his clothes, and now wore those in which he went to church and to the custom-house when in London or other large cities.

"There walks a just man," commented Dormer Colville, lightly, and no longer word could have described Captain Clubbe more aptly. He would rather have stayed in his own garden this evening to smoke his pipe in contemplative silence. But he had always foreseen that the day might

come when it would be his duty to do his best by Loo Barebone. He had not sought this opportunity, because, being a wise as well as a just man, he was not quite sure that he knew what the best would be.

He shook hands gravely with the strangers, and by his manner seemed to indicate his comprehension of Monsieur de Gemosac's well-turned phrases of welcome. Dormer Colville appeared to be in a silent humour, unless perchance he happened to be one of those rare beings who can either talk or hold their tongues as occasion may demand.

"You won't want me to put my oar in, I see," observed he, tentatively, as he drew forward a small table whereon were set three glasses and a bottle of the celebrated claret.

"I can understand French, but I don't talk it," replied the Captain, stolidly.

"And if I interpret as we go along, we shall sit here all night, and get very little said."

Colville explained the difficulty to the Marquis de Gemosac, and agreed with him that much time would be saved if Captain Clubbe would be kind enough to tell in English all that he knew of the nameless Frenchman buried in Farlingford churchyard, to be translated by Colville to Monsieur de Gemosac at another time. As Clubbe understood this, and nodded in acquiescence, there only remained to them to draw the cork and light their cigars.

"Not much to tell," said Clubbe, guardedly. "But what there is, is no secret, so far as I know. It has not been told because it was known long ago, and has been forgotten since. The man's dead and buried, and there's an end of him."

"Of him, yes, but not of his race," answered Colville.

"You mean the lad?" inquired the Captain, turning his calm and steady gaze to Colville's face. The whole man

seemed to turn, ponderously and steadily, like a siege-gun.

"That is what I meant," answered Colville. "You understand," he went on to explain, as if urged thereto by the fixed glance of the clear blue eye—"you understand, it is none of my business. I am only here as the Marquis de Gemosac's friend. Know him in his own country, where I live most of the time."

Clubbe nodded.

"Frenchman was picked up at sea fifty-five years ago this July," he narrated, bluntly, "by the 'Martha and Mary' brig of this port. I was apprentice at the time. Frenchman was a boy with fair hair and a womanish face. Bit of a cry-baby I used to think him, but being a boy myself I was perhaps hard on him. He was with his—well, his mother."

Captain Clubbe paused. He took the cigar from his lips and carefully replaced the outer leaf, which had wrinkled. Perhaps he waited to be asked a question. Colville glanced at him sideways and did not ask it.

"Dark night," the Captain continued, after a short silence, "and a heavy sea, about mid-channel off Dieppe. We sighted a French fishing-boat yawing about abandoned. Something queer about her, the skipper thought. Those were queer times in France. We hailed her, and getting no answer put out a boat and boarded her. There was nobody on board but a woman and a child. Woman was half mad with fear. I have seen many afraid, but never one like that. I was only a boy myself, but I remember thinking it wasn't the sea and drowning she was afraid of. We couldn't find out the smack's name. It had been painted out with a tar-brush, and she was half full of water. The skipper took the woman and child off, and left the

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fishing-smack as we found her yawing about—all sail set. They reckoned she would founder in a few minutes. But there was one old man on board, the boatswain, who had seen many years at sea, who said that she wasn't making any water at all, because he had been told to look for the leak and couldn't find it. He said that the water had been pumped into her so as to waterlog her ; and it was his belief that she had not been abandoned many minutes, that the crew were hanging about somewhere near in a boat waiting to see if we sighted her and put men on board."

Mr. Dormer Colville was attending to the claret, and pressed Captain Clubbe by a gesture of the hand to empty his glass.

"Something wrong somewhere?" he suggested, in a conversational way.

"By daylight we were ramping up channel with three French men-of-war after us," was Captain Clubbe's comprehensive reply. "As chance had it, the channel squadron hove in sight round the Foreland, and the Frenchmen turned and left us."

Clubbe marked a pause in his narrative by a glass of claret taken at one draught like beer.

"Skipper was a Farlingford man, name of Doy," he continued. "Long as he lived he was pestered by inquiries from the French government respecting a Dieppe fishing-smack supposed to have been picked up abandoned at sea. He had picked up no fishing-smack, and he answered no letters about it. He was an old man when it happened, and he died at sea soon after my indentures expired. The woman and child were brought here, where nobody could speak French, and, of course, neither of them could speak any English. The boy was white-faced and frightened at first, but he soon picked up spirit. They were taken in and cared

for by one and another—any who could afford it. For Farlingford has always bred seafaring men ready to give and take."

"So we were told yesterday by the rector. We had a long talk with him in the morning. A clever man, if——"

Dormer Colville did not complete the remark, but broke off with a sigh. He had no doubt seen trouble himself. For it is not always the ragged and unkempt who have been sore buffeted by the world, but also such as have a clean-washed look almost touching sleekness.

"Yes," said Clubbe, slowly and conclusively. "So you have seen the parson."

"Of course," Colville remarked, cheerfully, after a pause; for we cannot always be commiserating the unfortunate. "Of course, all this happened before his time, and Monsieur de Gemosac does not want to learn from hearsay, you understand, but at first hand. I fancy he would, for instance, like to know when the woman, the—mother died."

Clubbe was looking straight in front of him. He turned in his disconcerting, monumental way and looked at his questioner, who had imitated with a perfect ingenuousness his own brief pause before the word mother. Colville smiled pleasantly at him.

"I tell you frankly, Captain," he said, "it would suit me better if she wasn't the mother."

"I am not here to suit you," murmured Captain Clubbe, without haste or hesitation.

"No. Well, let us say for the present that she was the mother. We can discuss that another time. When did she die?"

"Seven years after landing here."

Colville made a mental calculation and nodded his head with satisfaction at the end of it. He lighted another cigarette.

"I am a business man, Captain," he said at length. "Fair dealing and a clean bond. That is what I have been brought up to. Confidence for confidence. Before we go any further——" He paused and seemed to think before committing himself. Perhaps he saw that Captain Clubbe did not intend to go much further without some *quid pro quo*. "Before we go any further, I think I may take it upon myself to let you into the Marquis's confidence. It is about an inheritance, Captain. A great inheritance and—well, that young fellow may well be the man. He may be born to greater things than a seafaring life, Captain."

"I don't want any marquis to tell me that," answered Clubbe, with his slow judicial smile. "For I've brought him up since the cradle. He's been at sea with me in fair weather and foul—and he is not the same as us."

CHAPTER VII

ON THE SCENT

Dormer Colville attached so much importance to the Captain's grave jest that he interpreted it at once to Monsieur de Gemosac.

"Captain Clubbe," he said, "tells us that he does not need to be informed that this Loo Barebone is the man we seek. He has long known it."

Which was a near enough rendering, perhaps, to pass muster in the hearing of two persons imperfectly acquainted with the languages so translated. Then, turning again to the sailor, he continued:

"Monsieur de Gemosac would naturally wish to know whether there were papers or any other means of identification found on the woman or the child?"

"There were a few papers. The woman had a Roman Catholic Missal in her pocket, and the child a small locket with a miniature portrait in it."

"Of the Queen Marie Antoinette?" suggested Colville, quickly.

"It may well have been. It is many years since I saw it. It was faded enough. I remember that it had a fall, and would not open afterward. No one has seen it for twenty-five years or so."

"The locket or the portrait?" inquired Colville, with

a light laugh, with which to disclaim any suggestion of a cross-examination.

"The portrait."

"And the locket?"

"My wife has it somewhere, I believe."

Colville gave an impatient laugh. For the peaceful air of Farlingford had failed to temper that spirit of energy and enterprise which he had acquired in cities—in Paris, most likely. He had no tolerance for quiet ways and a slow, sure progress, such as countrymen seek, who are so leisurely that the years slide past and death surprises them before they have done anything in the world but attend to its daily demand for a passing effort.

"Ah!" he cried, "but all that must be looked into if we are to do anything for this young fellow. You will find the Marquis anxious to be up and doing at once. You go so slowly in Farlingford, Captain. The world is hurrying on and this chance will be gone past before we are ready. Let us get these small proofs of identity collected together as soon as possible. Let us find that locket. But do not force it open. Give it to me as it is. Let us find the papers."

"There are no papers," interrupted Captain Clubbe, with a calm deliberation quite untouched by his companion's hurry.

"No papers?"

"No; for Frenchman burnt them before my eyes."

Dormer Colville meditated for a moment in silence. Although his manner was quick, he was perhaps as deliberate in his choice of a question as was Captain Clubbe in answering it.

"Why did he do that? Did he know who he was? Did he ever say anything to you about his former life—his childhood—his recollections of France?"

"He was not a man to say much," answered Clubbe, himself no man to repeat much.

Colville had been trying for some time to study the sailor's face, quietly through his cigar smoke.

"Look here, Captain," he said, after a pause. "Let us understand each other. There is a chance, just a chance, that we can prove this Loo Barebone to be the man we think him, but we must all stand together. We must be of one mind and one purpose. We four, Monsieur de Gemosac, you, Barebone, and my humble self. I fancy—well, I fancy it may prove to be worth our while."

"I am willing to do the best I can for Loo," was the reply.

"And I am willing to do the best I can for Monsieur de Gemosac, whose heart is set on this affair. And," Colville added, with his frank laugh, "let us hope that we may have our reward; for I am a poor man myself, and do not like the prospect of a careful old age. I suppose, Captain, that if a man were overburdened with wealth he would scarcely follow a seafaring life, eh?"

"Then there is money in it?" inquired Clubbe, guardedly.

"Money," laughed the other. "Yes—there is money for all concerned, and to spare."

Captain Clubbe had been born and bred among a people possessing little wealth and leading a hard life, only to come to want in old age. It was natural that this consideration should carry weight. He was anxious to do his best for the boy who had been brought up as his own son. He could think of nothing better than to secure him from want for the rest of his days. There were many qualities in Loo Barebone which he did not understand, for they were quite foreign to the qualities held to be virtues in Farlingford;

such as perseverance and method, a careful economy, and a rigid common sense. Frenchman had brought these strange ways into Farlingford when he was himself only a boy of ten, and they had survived his own bringing up in some of the austerest houses in the town, so vitally as to enable him to bequeath them almost unchastened to his son.

As has been noted, Loo had easily lived down the prejudices of his own generation against an un-English gaiety, and inconsequence almost amounting to emotion. And nothing is, or was in the solid days before these trumpet-blowing times, so unwelcome in British circles as emotion.

Frenchman had no doubt prepared the way for his son; but the peculiarities of thought and manner which might be allowed to pass in a foreigner would be less easily forgiven in Loo, who had Farlingford blood in his veins. For his mother had been a Clubbe, own cousin, and, as gossips whispered, once the sweetheart of Captain Clubbe himself and daughter of Seth Clubbe of Maiden's Grave, one of the largest farmers on the Marsh.

"It cannot be for no particular purpose that the boy has been created so different from any about him," Captain Clubbe muttered, reflectively, as he thought of Dormer Colville's words. For he had that simple faith in an Almighty Purpose, without which no wise man will be found to do business on blue water.

"It is strange how a man may be allowed to inherit from a grandfather he has never seen a trick of manner, or a face which are not the manner or face of his father," observed Colville, adapting himself, as was his habit, to the humour of his companion. "There must, as you suggest, be some purpose in it. God writes straight on crooked lines, Captain."

Thus Dormer Colville found two points of sympathy with this skipper of a slow coaster, who had never made a mistake at sea nor done an injustice to any one serving under him: a simple faith in the Almighty Purpose and a very honest respect for money. This was the beginning of a sort of alliance between four persons of very different character which was to influence the whole lives of many.

They sat on the tarred seat set against the weather-beaten wall of "The Black Sailor" until darkness came stealing in from the sea with the quiet that broods over flat lands, and an unpeopled shore. Colville had many questions to ask and many more which he withheld till a fitter occasion. But he learnt that Frenchman had himself stated his name to be Barebone when he landed, a forlorn and frightened little boy, on this barren shore, and had never departed from that asseveration when he came to learn the English language and marry an English wife. Captain Clubbe told also how Frenchman, for so he continued to be called long after his real name had been written twice in the parish register, had soon after his marriage destroyed the papers carefully preserved by the woman whom he never called mother, though she herself claimed that title.

She had supported herself, it appeared, by her needle, and never seemed to want money, which led the villagers to conclude that she had some secret store upon which to draw when in need. She had received letters from France, which were carefully treasured by her until her death, and for long afterward by Frenchman, who finally burnt all at his marriage, saying that he was now an Englishman and wanted to retain no ties with France. At this time, Clubbe remembered, Louis XVIII. was firmly established on the throne of France, the Restoration—known as the Second—having been brought about by the Allied Powers with a

high hand after the Hundred Days and the final downfall of Napoleon.

Frenchman may well have known that it might be worth his while to return to France and seek fortune there; but he never spoke of this knowledge nor made reference to the recollections of his childhood, which cast a cold reserve over his soul and steeped it with such a deadly hatred of France and all things French, that he desired to sever all memories that might link him with his native country or awake in the hearts of any children he should beget the desire to return thither.

A year after his marriage his wife died, and thus her son, left to the care of a lonely and misanthropic father, was brought up a Frenchman after all, and lisped his first words in that tongue.

"He lived long enough to teach him to speak French and think like a Frenchman, and then he died," said Captain Clubbe—"a young man reckoning by years, but in mind he was an older man than I am to-day."

"And his secret died with him?" suggested Dormer Colville, looking at the end of his cigar with a queer smile. But Captain Clubbe made no answer.

"One may suppose that he wanted it to die with him, at all events," added Colville, tentatively.

"You are right," was the reply, a local colloquialism in common use, as a clincher to a closed argument or an unwelcome truth. Captain Clubbe rose as he spoke and intimated his intention of departing, by jerking his head sideways at Monsieur de Gemosac, who, however, held out his hand with a Frenchman's conscientious desire to follow the English custom.

"I'll be getting home," said Clubbe, simply. As he spoke he peered across the marsh toward the river, and

Colville, following the direction of his gaze, saw the black silhouette of a large lug-sail against the eastern sky, which was softly grey with the foreglow of the rising moon.

"What is that?" asked Colville.

"That's Loo Barebone going up with the sea-breeze. He has been down to the rectory. He mostly goes there in the evening. There is a creek, you know, runs down from Maiden's Grave to the river."

"Ah!" answered Colville, thoughtfully, almost as if the creek and the large lug-sail against the sky explained something which he had not hitherto understood.

"I thought he might have come with you this evening," he added, after a pause. "For I suppose everybody in Farlingford knows why we are here. He does not seem very anxious to seek his fortune in France."

"No," answered Clubbe, lifting his stony face to the sky and studying the little clouds that hovered overhead awaiting the moon. "No—you are right."

Then he turned with a jerk of the head and left them. The Marquis de Gemosac watched him depart, and made a gesture toward the darkness of the night, into which he had vanished, indicative of a great despair.

"But," he exclaimed, "they are of a placidity—these English. There is nothing to be done with them, my friend, nothing to be done with such men as that. Now I understand how it is that they form a great nation. It is merely because they stand and let you thump them until you are tired, and then they proceed to do what they intended to do from the first."

"That is because we know that he who jumps about most actively will be the first to feel fatigue, Marquis," laughed Colville, pleasantly. "But you must not judge all England from these eastern people. It is here that you

will find the concentrated essence of British tenacity and stolidity—the leaven that leavens the whole."

"Then it is our misfortune to have to deal with these concentrated English—that is all."

The Marquis shrugged his shoulders with that light despair which is incomprehensible to any but men of Latin race.

"No, Marquis! there you are wrong," corrected Dormer Colville, with a sudden gravity, "for we have in Captain Clubbe the very man we want—one of the hardest to find in this chattering world—a man who will not say too much. If we can only make him say what we want him to say he will not ruin all by saying more. It is so much easier to say a word too much than a word too little. And remember he speaks French as well as English, though, being British, he pretends that he cannot."

Monsieur de Gemosac turned to peer at his companion in the darkness.

"You speak hopefully, my friend," he said. "There is something in your voice——"

"Is there?" laughed Colville, who seemed elated. "There may well be. For that man has been saying things in that placid monotone which would have taken your breath away had you been able to understand them. A hundred times I rejoiced that you understood no English, for your impatience, Marquis, might have silenced him as some rare-voiced bird is silenced by a sudden movement. Yes, Marquis, there is a locket containing a portrait of Marie Antoinette. There are other things also. But there is one drawback. The man himself is not anxious to come forward. There are reasons, it appears, here in Farlingford, why he should not seek his fortune elsewhere. To-morrow morning——"

Dormer Colville rose and yawned audibly. It almost appeared that he regretted having permitted himself a moment's enthusiasm on a subject which scarcely affected his interests.

"To-morrow morning I will see to it."

CHAPTER VIII

THE LITTLE BOY WHO WAS A KING

The Reverend Septimus Marvin had lost his wife five years earlier. It was commonly said that he had never been the same man since. Which was untrue. Much that is commonly said will, on investigation, be found to be far from the truth. Septimus Marvin had, so to speak, been the same man since infancy. He had always looked vaguely at the world through spectacles; had always been at a loss among his contemporaries—a generation already tainted by that shallow spirit of haste which is known to-day as modernity—at a loss for a word; at a loss for a companion soul.

He was a scholar and a learned historian. His companions were books, and he communed in spirit with writers who were dead and gone.

Had he ever been a different man his circumstances would assuredly have been other. His wife, for instance, would in all human probability have been alive. His avocation might have been more suited to his capabilities. He was not intended for a country parish, and that practical, human comprehension of the ultimate value of little daily details, without which a pastor never yet understood his flock, was not vouchsafed to him.

"Passen takes no account o' churchyard," River Andrew

had said, and neither he nor any other in Farlingford could account for the special neglect to which was abandoned that particular corner of the burial ground where the late Mrs. Marvin reposed beneath an early Victorian headstone of singular hideousness.

Mr. Marvin always went round the other way.

"Seems as he has forgotten her wonderful quick," commented the women of Farlingford. But perhaps they were wrong. If he had forgotten, he might be expected to go round by the south side of the church by accident occasionally, especially as it was the shorter way from the rectory to the porch. He was an absent-minded man, but he always remembered, as River Andrew himself admitted, to go north about. And his wife's grave was overgrown by salted grass as were the rest.

Farlingford had accepted him, when his College, having no use for such a dreamer elsewhere, gave him the living, not only with resignation, but with equanimity. This remote parish, cut off from the busier mainland by wide heaths and marshes, sparsely provided with ill-kept roads, had never looked for a bustling activity in its rectors. Their forefathers had been content with a gentleman, given to sport and the pursuits of a country squire, marked on the seventh day by a hearty and robust godliness. They would have preferred Parson Marvin to have handled a boat and carried a gun. But he had his good qualities. He left them alone. And they are the most independent people in the world.

When his wife died, his sister, the widow of an Indian officer, bustled eastward, from a fashionable Welsh watering-place, just to satisfy herself, as she explained to her West-country friends, that he would not marry his cook before six months elapsed. After that period she proposed to wash

her hands of him. She was accompanied by her only child, Miriam, who had just left school.

Six months later Septimus Marvin was called upon to give away his sister to a youthful brother officer of her late husband, which ceremony he performed with a sigh of relief audible in the farthest recess of the organ loft. While the wedding-bells were still ringing, the bride, who was not dreamy or vague like her brother, gave Septimus to understand that he had promised to provide Miriam with a home —that he really needed a woman to keep things going at the rectory and to watch over the tender years of little Sep—and that Miriam's boxes were packed.

Septimus had no recollection of the promise. And his sister was quite hurt that he should say such a thing as that on her wedding day and spoil everything. He had no business to make the suggestion if he had not intended to carry it out. So the bride and bridegroom went away in a shower of good wishes and rice to the life of organized idleness, for which the gentleman's education and talents eminently befitted him, and Miriam returned to Farlingford with Septimus.

In those days the railway passed no nearer to Farlingford than Ipswich, and before the arrival of their train at that station Miriam had thoroughly elucidated the situation. She had discovered that she was not expected at the rectory, and that Septimus had never offered of his own free will the home which he now kindly pressed upon her—two truths which the learned historian fondly imagined to be for ever locked up in his own heart, which was a kind one and the heart of a gentleman.

Miriam also learned that Septimus was very poor. She did not need to be informed that he was helpless. Her instinct had told her that long ago. She was only nineteen,

but she looked at men and women with those discerning grey eyes, in which there seemed to lurk a quiet light like the light of stars, and saw right through them. She was woman enough—despite the apparent inconsequence of the schoolroom, which still lent a vagueness to her thoughts and movements—to fall an easy victim to the appeal of helplessness. Years, it would appear, are of no account in certain feminine instincts. Miriam had probably been woman enough at ten years of age to fly to the rescue of the helpless.

She did not live permanently at the rectory, but visited her mother from time to time, either in England, or at one of the foreign resorts of idle people. But the visits, as years went by, became shorter and rarer. At twenty-one Miriam came into a small fortune of her own, left by her father in the hands of executors, one of whom was that John Turner, the Paris banker, who had given Dormer Colville a letter of introduction to Septimus Marvin. The money was sorely needed at the rectory, and Miriam drew freely enough on John Turner.

"You are an extravagant girl," said that astute financier to her, when they met at the house of Mrs. St. Pierre Lawrence, at Royan, in France. "I wonder what you spend it on! But I don't trouble my head about it. You need not explain, you understand. But you can come to me when you want advice or help. You will find me—in the background. I am a fat old man, in the background. Useful enough in my way, perhaps, even to a pretty girl with a sound judgment."

There were many, who, like Loo Barebone, reflected that there were other worlds open to Miriam Liston. At first she went into those other worlds, under the flighty wing of her mother, and looked about her there. Captain and Mrs.

Duncan belonged to the Anglo-French society, which had sprung into existence since the downfall of Napoleon I., and was in some degree the outcome of the part played by Great Britain in the comedy of the Bourbon and Orleanist collapse. Captain Duncan had retired from the army, changing his career from one of a chartered to an unchartered uselessness, and he herded with tarnished aristocracy and half-pay failures in the smoking-rooms of Continental clubs.

Miriam returned, after a short experience of this world, to Farlingford, as to the better part. At first she accepted invitations to some of the country houses open to her by her connection with certain great families. But after a time she seemed to fall under the spell of that quiet life which is still understood and lived in a few remote places.

"What can you find to do all day and to think about all night at that bleak corner of England?" inquired her friends, themselves restless by day and sleepless by night by reason of the heat of their pursuit of that which is called pleasure.

"If he wants to marry his cook let him do it and be done with us," wrote her mother from the south of France. "Come and join us at Biarritz. The Prince President will be here this winter. We shall be very gay. . . . P.S. We shall not ask you to stay with us as we are hard up this quarter; but to share expenses. Mind come."

But Miriam remained at Farlingford, and there is nothing to be gained by seeking to define her motive. There are two arguments against seeking a woman's motive. Firstly, she probably has none. Secondly, should she have one she will certainly have a counterfeit, which she will dangle before your eyes, and you will seize it.

Dormer Colville might almost be considered to belong to the world of which Captain and Mrs. Duncan were such

brilliant ornaments. But he did not so consider himself. For their world was essentially British, savoured here and there by a French count or so, at whose person and title the French aristocracy of undoubted genuineness looked askance. Dormer Colville counted his friends among these latter. In fact, he moved in those royalist circles who thought that there was little to choose between the Napoleonic and the Orleanist *régime*. He carefully avoided intimacy with Englishmen whose residence in foreign parts was continuous and in constant need of explanation. Indeed, if a man's life needs explanation, he must sooner or later find himself face to face with some one who will not listen to him.

Colville, however, knew all about Captain Duncan, and knew what was ignored by many, namely, that he was nothing worse than foolish. He knew all about Miriam, for he was in the confidence of Mrs. St. Pierre Lawrence. He knew that that lady wondered why Miriam preferred Farlingford to the high-bred society of her own circle at Royan and in Paris.

He thought he knew why Loo Barebone showed so little enterprise. And he was, as Madame de Chantonnay had frequently told him, more than half a Frenchman in the quickness of his intuitions. He picked a flower for his buttonhole from the garden of the "Black Sailor," and set forth the morning after his interview with Captain Clubbe toward the rectory. It was a cool July morning, with the sun half obscured by a fog-bank driven in from the sea. Through the dazzling white of that which is known on these coasts as the water-smoke the sky shone a cloudless blue. The air was light and thin. It is the lightest and thinnest air in England. Dormer Colville hummed a song under his breath as he walked on the top of the dyke. He was a light-hearted man, full of hope and optimism.

"Am I disturbing your studies?" he asked, with his easy laugh, as he came rather suddenly on Miriam and little Sep in the turf-shelter at the corner of the rectory garden. "You must say so if I am."

They had, indeed, their books, and the boy's face wore that abstracted look which comes from a very earnest desire not to see the many interesting things on earth and sea, which always force themselves upon the attention of the young at the wrong time. Colville had already secured Sep's friendship by the display of a frank ignorance of natural history only equalled by his desire to be taught.

"We're doing history," replied Sep, frankly, jumping up and shaking hands.

"Ah, yes. William the Conqueror, ten hundred and sixty-six, and all the rest of it. I know. At least I knew once, but I have forgotten."

"No. We're doing French history. Miriam likes that best, but I hate it."

"French history," said Colville, thoughtfully. "Yes. That is interesting. Miss Liston likes that best, does she? Or, perhaps, she thinks that it is best for you to know it. Do you know all about Louis XVI. and Marie Antoinette?"

"Pretty well," admitted Sep, doubtfully.

"When I was a little chap like you, I knew many people who had seen Louis XVI. and Marie Antoinette. That was long, long ago," he added, turning to Miriam to make the admission. "But those are not the things that one forgets, are they, Miss Liston?"

"Then I wish Sep could know somebody who would make him remember," answered Miriam, half closing the book in her hand; for she was very quick and had seen Colville's affable glance take it in in passing, as it took in everything within sight.

"A King, for instance," he said, slowly. "A King of France. Others—prophets and righteous men—have desired to see that, Miss Liston."

It seemed, however, that he had seen enough to know the period which they were studying.

"I suppose," he said, after a pause, "that in this studious house you talk and think history, and more especially French history. It must be very quiet and peaceful. Much more restful than acting in it as my friend de Gemosac has done all his life, as I myself have done in a small way. For France takes her history so much more violently than you do in England. France is tossed about by it, while England stands and is hammered on the anvil of Time, as it were, and remains just the same shape as before."

He broke off and turned to Sep.

"Do you know the story of the little boy who was a King?" he asked, abruptly. "They put him in prison and he escaped. He was carried out in a clothes-basket. Funny, is it not? And he escaped from his enemies and reached another country, where he became a sailor. He grew to be a man and he married a woman of that country, and she died, leaving him with a little boy. And then he died himself and left the little boy, who was taken care of by his English relations, who never knew that he was a King. But he was; for his father was a King before him, and his grandfathers—far, far back. Back to the beginning of the book that Miss Liston holds in her hand. The little boy—he was an orphan, you see—became a sailor. He never knew that he was a King—the Hope of his country, of all the old men and the wise men in it—the holder of the fate of nations. Think of that."

The story pleased Sep, who sat with open lips and eager eyes, listening to it.

"Do you think it is an interesting story? What do you think is the end of it?"

"I don't know," answered Sep, gravely.

"Neither do I. No one knows the end of that story—yet. But if you were a King—if you were that boy—what would you do? Would you go and be a King, or would you be afraid?"

"No. I should go and be a King. And fight battles."

"But you would have to leave everybody. You would have to leave your father."

"I should not mind that," answered Sep, brutally.

"You would leave Miss Liston?"

"I should have to," was the reply, with conviction.

"Ah, yes," said Colville, with a grave nod of the head. "Yes. I suppose you would have to if you were anything of a man at all. There would be no alternative—for a real man."

"Besides," put in Sep, jumping from side to side on his seat with eagerness, "she would make me—wouldn't you, Miriam?"

Colville had turned away and was looking northward toward the creek, known as Maiden's Grave, running through the marshes to the river. A large lug-sail broke the flat line of the horizon, though the boat to which it belonged was hidden by the raised dyke.

"Would she?" inquired Colville, absent-mindedly, without taking his eyes from the sail which was creeping slowly toward them. "Well—you know Miss Liston's character better than I do, Sep. And no doubt you are right. And you are not that little boy, so it doesn't matter; does it?"

After a pause he turned and glanced sideways at Miriam.

who was looking straight in front of her with steady eyes and white cheeks.

They could hear Loo Barebone singing gaily in the boat, which was hidden below the level of the dyke. And they watched, in a sudden silence, the sail pass down the river toward the quay.

CHAPTER IX

A MISTAKE

THE tide was ebbing still when Barebone loosed his boat, one night, from the grimy steps leading from the garden of Maiden's Grave farm down to the creek. It was at the farm-house that Captain Clubbe now lived when on shore. He had lived there since the death of his brother, two years earlier—that grim Clubbe of Maiden's Grave, whose methods of life and agriculture are still quoted on market days from Colchester to Beccles.

The evenings were shorter now, for July was drawing to a close, and the summer is brief on these coasts. The moon was not up yet, but would soon rise. Barebone hoisted the great lug-sail, that smelt of seaweed and tannin. There was a sleepy breeze blowing in from the cooler sea, to take the place of that hot and shimmering air which had been rising all day from the corn-fields. He was quicker in his movements than those who usually handled these stiff ropes and held the clumsy tiller. Quick—and quiet for once. He had been three nights to the rectory, only to find the rector there, vaguely kind, looking at him with a watery eye, through the spectacles which were rarely straight upon his nose, with an unasked question on his hesitating lips.

For Septimus Marvin knew that Colville, in the name of the Marquis de Gemosac, had asked Loo Barebone to go to

France and institute proceedings there to recover a great heritage, which it seemed must be his. And Barebone had laughed and put off his reply from day to day for three days.

Few knew of it in Farlingford, though many must have suspected the true explanation of the prolonged stay of the two strangers at the "Black Sailor." Captain Clubbe and Septimus Marvin, Dormer Colville and Monsieur de Gemosac shared this knowledge, and awaited, impatiently enough, an answer which could assuredly be only in the affirmative. Clubbe was busy enough throughout the day at the old slip-way, where "The Last Hope" was under repair—the last ship, it appeared likely, that the rotten timbers could support or the old, old shipwrights mend.

Loo Barebone was no less regular in his attendance at the river-side, and worked all day, on deck or in the rigging, at leisurely sail-making or neat seizing of a worn rope. He was gay, and therefore incomprehensible to a slow-thinking, grave-faced race.

"What do I want with a heritage?" he asked, carelessly. "I am mate of 'The Last Hope'—and that is all. Give me time. I have not made up my mind yet, but I think it will be No."

And oddly enough, it was Colville who preached patience to his companions in suspense.

"Give him time," he said. "There can only be one answer to such a proposal. But he is young. It is not when we are young that we see the world as it really is, but live in a land of dreams. Give him time."

The Marquis de Gemosac was impatient, however, and was for telling Barebone more than had been disclosed to him.

"There is no knowing," he cried, "what that *canaille* is doing in France."

"There is no knowing," admitted Colville, with his air of suppressing a half-developed yawn, "but I think we know, all the same—you and I, Marquis. And there is no hurry."

After three days Loo Barebone had still given no answer. As he hoisted the sail and felt for the tiller in the dark, he was, perhaps, meditating on this momentous reply, or perhaps he had made up his mind long before, and would hold to the decision even to his own undoing, as men do who are impulsive and not strong. The water lapped and gurgled round the bows, for the wind was almost ahead, and it was only by nursing the heavy boat that he saved the necessity of making a tack across the narrow creek. In the morning he had, as usual, run down into the river and to the slip-way, little suspecting that Miriam and Sep were just above him behind the dyke, where they had sat three days before listening to Dormer Colville's story of the little boy who was a King. To-night he ran the boat into the coarse and wiry grass where Septimus Marvin's own dinghy lay, half hidden by the reeds, and he stumbled ashore clutching at the dewy grass as he climbed the side of the dyke.

He went toward the turf-shelter half despondently, and then stopped short a few yards away from it. For Miriam was there. He thought she was alone, and paused to make sure before he spoke. She was sitting at the far corner, sheltered from the north wind. For Farlingford is like a ship—always conscious of the lee- and the weather-side, and all who live there are half sailors in their habits—subservient to the wind.

"At last," said Loo, with a little vexed laugh. He could see her face turned toward him, but her eyes were only dark shadows beneath her hair. Her face looked white in the darkness. Her answering laugh had a soothing note in it.

"Why—at last?" she asked. Her voice was frank and quietly assured in its friendliness. They were old comrades, it seemed, and had never been anything else. The best friendship is that which has never known a quarrel, although poets and others may sing the tenderness of a reconciliation. The friendship that has a quarrel and a reconciliation in it is like a man with a weak place left in his constitution by a past sickness. He may die of something else in the end, but the probability is that he must reckon at last with that healed sore. The friendship may perish from some other cause—a marriage, or success in life, one of the two great severers—but that salved quarrel is more than likely to recur and kill at last.

These two had never fallen out. And it was the woman who, contrary to custom, fended the quarrel now.

"Oh! because I have been here three nights in succession, I suppose, and did not find you here. I was disappointed."

"But you found Uncle Septimus in his study. I could hear you talking there until quite late."

"Of course I was very glad to see him and talk with him. For it is to him that I owe a certain half-developed impatience with the uneducated—with whom I deal all my life, except for a few hours now and then in the study and here in the turf-shelter with you. I can see—even in the dark—that you look grave. Do not do that. It is not worth that."

He broke off with his easy laugh, as if to banish any suggestion of gravity coming from himself.

"It is not worth looking grave about. And I am sorry if I was rude a minute ago. I had no right, of course, to assume that you would be here. I suppose it was impertinent—was that it?"

"I will not quarrel," she answered, soothingly—"if that is what you want."

Her voice was oddly placid. It almost seemed to suggest that she had come to-night for a certain purpose; that one subject of conversation alone would interest her, and that to all others she must turn a deaf ear.

He came a little nearer, and, leaning against the turf wall, looked down at her. He was suddenly grave now. The *rôles* were again reversed; for it was the woman who was tenacious to one purpose and the man who seemed inconsequent, flitting from grave to gay, from one thought to another. His apology had been made graciously enough, but with a queer pride, quite devoid of the sullenness which marks the pride of the humbly situated.

"No; I do not want that," he answered. "I want a little sympathy, that is all; because I have been educated above my station. And I looked for it from those who are responsible for that which is nearly always a catastrophe. And it is your uncle who educated me. He is responsible in the first instance, and, of course, I am grateful to him."

"He could never have educated you," put in Miriam, "if you had not been ready for the education."

Barebone put aside the point. He must, at all events, have learnt humility from Septimus Marvin—a quality not natural to his temperament.

"And you are responsible, as well," he went on, "because you have taught me a use for the education."

"Indeed!" she said, gently and interrogatively, as if at last he had reached the point to which she wished to bring him.

"Yes; the best use to which I could ever put it. To talk to you on an equality."

He looked hard at her through the darkness, which was

less intense now; for the moon was not far below the horizon. Her face looked white, and he thought that she was breathing quickly. But they had always been friends; he remembered that just in time.

"It is only natural that I should look forward, when we are at sea, to coming back here—" He paused and kicked the turf-wall with his heel, as if to remind her that she had sat in the same corner before and he had leant against the same wall, talking to her. "They are good fellows, of course, with a hundred fine qualities which I lack, but they do not understand half that one may say, or think—even the Captain. He is well educated, in his way, but it is only the way of a coasting-captain who has risen by his merits to the command of a foreign-going ship."

Miriam gave an impatient little sigh. He had veered again from the point.

"You think that I forget that he is my relative," said Loo, sharply, detecting in his quickness of thought a passing resentment. "I do not. I never forget that. I am the son of his cousin. I know that, and thus related to many in Farlingford. But I have never called him cousin, and he has never asked me to."

"No," said Miriam, with averted eyes, in that other voice, which made him turn and look at her, catching his breath.

"Oh!" he said, with a sudden laugh of comprehension. "You have heard what, I suppose, is common talk in Farlingford. You know what has brought these people here—this Monsieur de Gemosac, and the other—what is his name? Dormer Colville. You have heard of my magnificent possibilities. And I—I had forgotten all about them."

He threw out his arms in a gesture of gay contempt; for even in the dark he could not refrain from adding to the

meaning of mere words a hundred-fold by the help of his lean hands and mobile face.

"I have heard of it, of course," she admitted, "from several people. But I have heard most from Captain Clubbe. He takes it more seriously than you do. You do not know, because he is one of those men who are most silent with those to whom they are most attached. He thinks that it is providential that my uncle should have had the desire to educate you, and that you should have displayed such capacity to learn."

"Capacity?" he protested—"say genius! Do not let us do things by halves. Genius to learn—yes; go on."

"Ah! you may laugh," Miriam said, lightly, "but it is serious enough. You will find circumstances too strong for you. You will have to go to France to claim your—heritage."

"Not I, if it means leaving Farlingford for ever and going to live among strange people, like the Marquis de Gemosac, for instance, who gives me the impression of a thousand petty ceremonies and a million futile memories."

He turned and lifted his face to the breeze which blew from the sea over flat stretches of sand and seaweed—the crispest, most invigorating air in the world except that which blows on the Baltic shores.

"I prefer Farlingford. I am half a Clubbe—and the other half!—Heaven knows what that is! The offshoot of some forgotten seedling blown away from France by a great storm. If my father knew, he never said anything. And if he knew, and said nothing, one may be sure that it was because he was ashamed of what he knew. You never saw him, or you would have known his dread of France, or anything that was French. He was a man living in a dream. His body was here in Farlingford, but his mind

was elsewhere—who knows where? And at times I feel that, too—that unreality—as if I were here, and somewhere else at the same time. But all the same, I prefer Farlingford, even if it is a dream."

The moon had risen at last; a waning half-moon, lying low and yellow in the sky, just above the horizon, casting a feeble light on earth. Loo turned and looked at Miriam, who had always met his glance with her thoughtful, steady eyes. But now she turned away.

"Farlingford is best, at all events," he said, with an odd conviction. "I am only the grandson of old Seth Clubbe, of Maiden's Grave. I am a Farlingford sailor, and that is all. I am mate of 'The Last Hope'—at your service."

"You are more than that."

He made a step nearer to her, looking down at her white face, averted from him. For her voice had been uncertain—unsteady—as if she were speaking against her will.

"Even if I am only that," he said, suddenly grave, "Farlingford may still be a dream—Farlingford and—you."

"What do you mean?" she asked, in a quick, mechanical voice, as if she had reached a desired crisis at last and was prepared to act.

"Oh, I only mean what I have meant always," he answered. "But I have been afraid—afraid. One hears, sometimes, of a woman who is generous enough to love a man who is a nobody—to think only of love. Sometimes—last voyage, when you used to sit where you are sitting now—I have thought that it might have been my extraordinary good fortune to meet such a woman."

He waited for some word or sign, but she sat motionless.

"You understand," he went on, "how contemptible must seem their talk of a heritage in France, when such a thought is in one's mind, even if——"

"Yes," she interrupted, hastily. "You were quite wrong. You were mistaken."

"Mistaking in thinking you——"

"Yes," she interrupted again. "You are quite mistaken, and I am very sorry, of course, that it should have happened."

She was singularly collected, and spoke in a matter-of-fact voice. Barebone's eyes gleamed suddenly; for she had aroused—perhaps purposely—a pride which must have accumulated in his blood through countless generations. She struck with no uncertain hand.

"Yes," he said, slowly; "it is to be regretted. Is it because I am the son of a nameless father and only the mate of 'The Last Hope'?"

"If you were before the mast—" she answered—"if you were a King, it would make no difference. It is simply because I do not care for you in that way."

"You do not care for me—in that way," he echoed, with a laugh, which made her move as if she were shrinking. "Well, there is nothing more to be said to that."

He looked at her slowly, and then took off his cap as if to bid her good-bye. But he forgot to replace it, and he went away with the cap in his hand. She heard the clink of a chain as he loosed his boat.

CHAPTER X.

IN THE ITALIAN HOUSE

The Abbé Touvent was not a courageous man, and the perspiration, induced by the climb from the high-road up that which had once been the ramp to the Château of Gemosac, ran cold when he had turned the key in the rusty lock of the great gate. It was not a dark night, for the moon sailed serenely behind fleecy clouds, but the shadows cast by her silvery light might harbour any terror.

It is easy enough to be philosophic at home in a chair beside the lamp. Under those circumstances, the Abbé had reflected that no one would rob him, because he possessed nothing worth stealing. But now, out here in the dark, he recalled a hundred instances of wanton murder duly recorded in the newspaper which he shared with three parishioners in Gemosac.

He paused to wipe his brow with a blue cotton handkerchief before pushing open the gate, and, being alone, was not too proud to peep through the keyhole before laying his shoulder against the solid and weather-beaten oak. He glanced nervously at the loopholes in the flanking towers and upward at the machicolated battlement overhanging him, as if any crumbling peep-hole might harbour gleaming eyes. He hurried through the passage beneath the vaulted roof without daring to glance to either side, where doorways

and steps to the towers were rendered more fearsome by heavy curtains of ivy.

The enceinte of the castle of Gemosac is three-sided, with four towers jutting out at the corners, from which to throw a flanking fire upon any who should raise a ladder against the great curtains, built of that smooth, white stone which is quarried at Brantôme and on the banks of the Dordogne. The fourth side of the enceinte stands on a solid rock, above the little river that loses itself in the flat-lands bordering the Gironde, so that it can scarce be called a tributary of that wide water. A moss-grown path round the walls will give a quick walker ten minutes' exercise to make the round from one tower of the gateway to the other.

Within the enciente are the remains of the old castle, still solid and upright; erected, it is recorded, by the English during their long occupation of this country. A more modern château, built after the final expulsion of the invader, adjoins the ancient structure, and in the centre of the vast enclosure, raised above the walls, stands a square house, in the Italian style, built in the time of Marie de Medici, and never yet completed. There are, also, gardens and shaded walks and vast stables, a chapel, two crypts, and many crumbling remains inside the walls, that offered a passive resistance to the foe in olden time, and as successfully hold their own to-day against the prying eye of a democratic curiosity.

Above the stables, quite close to the gate, half a dozen rooms were in the occupation of the Marquis de Gemosac; but it was not to these that the Abbé Touvent directed his tremulous steps.

Instead, he went toward the square, isolated house, standing in the middle of that which had once been the great court, and was now half garden, half hayfield. The hay

had been cut, and the scent of the new stack, standing against the walls of the oldest château and under its leaking roof, came warm and aromatic to mix with the breath of the evening primrose and rosemary clustering in disorder on the ill-defined borders. The grim walls, that had defended the Gemosacs against franker enemies in other days, served now to hide from the eyes of the villagers the fact—which must, however, have been known to them—that the Marquis de Gemosac, in gloves, kept this garden himself, and had made the hay with no other help than that of his old coachman and Marie, that capable, brown-faced *bonne-à-tout-faire*, who is assuredly the best man in France to-day.

In this clear, southern atmosphere the moon has twice the strength of that to which we are accustomed in mistier lands, and the Abbé looked about him with more confidence as he crossed the great court. There were frogs in a rain-water tank constructed many years ago, when some enterprising foe had been known to cut off the water-supply of a besieged château, and their friendly croak brought a sense of company and comfort to the Abbé's timid soul.

The door of the Italian house stood open, for the interior had never been completed, and only one apartment, a lofty banqueting-hall, had ever been furnished. Within the doorway, the Abbé fumbled in the pocket of his soutane and rattled a box of matches. He carried a parcel in his hand, which he now unfolded, and laid out on the lid of a mouldy chest half a dozen candles. When he struck a match a flight of bats whirred out of the doorway, and the Abbé's breath whistled through his teeth.

He lighted two candles, and carrying them, alight, in one hand—not without dexterity, for candles played an important part in his life—he went forward. The flickering light showed his face to be a fat one, kind enough,

gleaming now with perspiration and fear, but shiny at other times with that Christian tolerance which makes men kind to their own failings. It was very dark within the house, for all the shutters were closed.

The Abbé lighted a third candle and fixed it, with a drop of its own wax, on the high mantel of the great banqueting-hall. There were four or five candlesticks on side-tables, and a candelabra stood in the centre of a long table, running the length of the room. In a few minutes the Abbé had illuminated the apartment, which smelt of dust and the days of a dead monarchy. Above his head, the bats were describing complicated figures against a ceiling which had once been painted in the Italian style, to represent a trellis roof, with roses and vines entwined. Half a dozen portraits of men, in armour and wigs, looked down from the walls. One or two of them were rotting from their frames, and dangled a despondent corner out into the room.

There were chairs round the table, set as if for a phantom banquet amid these mouldering environments, and their high carved backs threw fantastic shadows on the wall.

While the Abbé was still employed with the candles, he heard a heavy step and loud breathing in the hall without, where he had carefully left a light.

"Why did you not wait for me on the hill, *malhonnête?*" asked a thick voice, like the voice of a man, but the manner was the manner of a woman. "I am sure you must have heard me. One hears me like a locomotive, now that I have lost my slimness."

She came into the room as she spoke, unwinding a number of black, knitted shawls, in which she was enveloped. There were so many of them, and of such different shape and texture, that some confusion ensued. The Abbé ran to her assistance.

"But, Madame," he cried, "how can you suspect me of such a crime? I came early to make these preparations. And as for hearing you—would to Heaven I had! For it needs courage to be a Royalist in these days—especially in the dark, by one's self."

He seemed to know the shawls, for he disentangled them with skill and laid them aside, one by one.

The Comtesse de Chantonnay breathed a little more freely, but no friendly hand could disencumber her of the mountains of flesh, which must have weighed down any heart less buoyant and courageous.

"Ah, bah!" she cried, gaily. "Who is afraid? What could they do to an old woman? Ah! you hold up your hands. That is kind of you. But I am no longer young, and there is my Albert—with those stupid whiskers. It is unfilial to wear whiskers, and I have told him so. And you —who could harm you—a priest? Besides, no one could be a priest, and not a Royalist, Abbé!"

"I know it, Madame, and that is why I am one. Have we been seen, Madame la Comtesse? The village was quiet, as you came through?"

"Quiet as my poor husband in his grave. Tell me, Abbé, now, honestly, am I thinner? I have deprived myself of coffee these two days."

The Abbé walked gravely round her. It was quite an excursion.

"Who would have you different, Madame, to what you are?" he temporized. "To be thin is so ungenerous. And Albert—where is he? You have not surely come alone?"

"Heaven forbid!—and I a widow!" replied Madame de Chantonnay, arranging, with a stout hand, the priceless lace on her dress. "Albert is coming. We brought a lantern, although it is a moon. It is better. Besides, it is always

done by those who conspire. And Albert had his great cloak, and he fell up a step in the courtyard and dropped the lantern, and lost it in the long grass. I left him looking for it, in the dark. He was not afraid, my brave Albert!"

"He has the dauntless heart of his mother," murmured the Abbé, gracefully, as he ran round the table setting the chairs in order. He had already offered the largest and strongest to the Comtesse, and it was creaking under her now, as she moved to set her dress in order.

"Assuredly," she admitted, complacently. "Has not France produced a Jeanne d'Arc and a Duchesse de Berri? It was not from his father, at all events, that he inherited his courage. For he was a poltroon, that man. Yes, my dear Abbé, let us be honest, and look at life as it is. He was a poltroon, and I thought I loved him—for two or three days only, however. And I was a child then. I was beautiful."

"Was?" echoed the Abbé, reproachfully.

"Silence, wicked one! And you a priest."

"Even an ecclesiastic, Madame, may have eyes," he said, darkly, as he snuffed a candle and, subsequently, gave himself a mechanical thump on the chest, in the region of the heart.

"Then they should wear blinkers, like a horse," said Madame, severely, as if wearied by an admiration so universal that it palled.

At this moment, Albert de Chantonnay entered the room. He was enveloped in a long black cloak, which he threw off his shoulders and cast over the back of a chair, not without an obvious appreciation of its possibilities of the picturesque. He looked round the room with a mild eye, which refused to lend itself to mystery or a martial ruthlessness.

He was a young man with a very thin neck, and the

whiskers, of which his mother made complaint, were scarcely visible by the light of the Abbé's candles.

"Good!" he said, in a thin tenor voice. "We are in time."

He came forward to the table, with long, nervous strides. He was not exactly impressive, but his manner gave the assurance of a distinct earnestness of purpose. The majority of us are unfortunately situated toward the world, as regards personal appearance. Many could pass for great if their physical proportions were less mean. There are thousands of worthy and virtuous young men who never receive their due in social life because they have red hair or stand four-feet-six high, or happen to be the victim of an inefficient dentist. The world, it would seem, does not want virtue or solid worth. It prefers appearance to either. Albert de Chantonnay would, for instance, have carried twice the weight in Royalist councils if his neck had been thicker.

He nodded to the Abbé.

"I received your message," he said, in the curt manner of the man whose life is in his hand, or is understood, in French theatrical circles, to be thus uncomfortably situated. "The letter?"

"It is here, Monsieur Albert," replied the Abbé, who was commonplace, and could not see himself as he wished others to see him. There was only one Abbé Touvent, for morning or afternoon, for church or fête, for the château or the cottage. There were a dozen Albert de Chantonnays, fierce or tender, gay or sad, a poet or a soldier—a light persifleur, who had passed through the mill, and had emerged hard and shining, or a young man of soul, capable of high ideals. To-night, he was the politician—the conspirator—quick of eye, curt of speech.

He held out his hand for the letter.

"You are to read it, as Monsieur le Marquis instructs me, Monsieur Albert," hazarded the Abbé, touching the breast pocket of his soutane, where Monsieur de Gemosac's letter lay hidden, "to those assembled."

"But, surely, I am to read it to myself first," was the retort; "or else how can I give it proper value?"

CHAPTER XI

A BEGINNING

THERE may be some who refuse to take seriously a person like Albert de Chantonnay because, forsooth, he happened to possess a sense of the picturesque. There are, as a matter of fact, thousands of sensible persons in the British Isles who fail completely to understand the average Frenchman. To the English comprehension it is, for instance, surprising that in time of stress—when Paris was besieged by a German army—a hundred *franc-tireur* corps should spring into existence, who gravely decked themselves in sombreros and red waist-cloths, and called themselves the "Companions of Death," or some claptrap title of a similar sound. Nevertheless, these "Companions of Death" fought at Orleans as few have fought since man walked this earth, and died as bravely as any in a government uniform. Even the stolid German foe forgot, at last, to laugh at the sombrero worn in midwinter.

It is useless to dub a Frenchman unreal and theatrical when he gaily carries his unreality and his perception of the dramatic to the lucarne of the guillotine and meets imperturbably the most real thing on earth, Death.

Albert de Chantonnay was a good Royalist—a better Royalist, as many were in France at this time, than the King

—and, perhaps, he carried his loyalty to the point that is reached by the best form of flattery.

Let it be remembered that when, on the 3rd of May, 1814, Louis XVIII. was reinstated, not by his own influence or exertions, but by the allied sovereigns who had overthrown Napoleon, he began at once to issue declarations and decrees as of the nineteenth year of his reign, ignoring the Revolution and Napoleon. Did this Bourbon really take himself seriously? Did he really expect the world to overlook Napoleon, or did he know as all the world knows to-day, that long after the Bourbons have sunk into oblivion the name of Napoleon will continue to be a household word?

If a situation is thus envisaged by a King, what may the wise expect from a Royalist?

In the absence of the Marquis de Gemosac, Albert de Chantonnay was considered to be the leader of the party in that quiet corner of south-western France which lies north of Bordeaux and south of that great dividing river, the Loire. He was, moreover, looked upon as representing that younger blood of France, to which must be confided the hopes and endeavours of the men, now passing away one by one, who had fought and suffered for their kings.

It was confidently whispered throughout this pastoral country that August Persons, living in exile in England and elsewhere, were in familiar and confidential correspondence with the Marquis de Gemosac, and, in a minor degree, with Albert de Chantonnay. For kings, and especially deposed kings, may not be choosers, but must take the instrument that comes to hand. A constitutional monarch is, by the way, better placed in this respect, for it is his people who push the instrument into his grasp, and in the long run the people nearly always read a man aright despite the efforts of a cheap press to lead them astray.

"If it were not written in the Marquis's own writing I could not have believed it," said Albert de Chantonnay, speaking aloud his own thoughts. He turned the letter this way and that, examining first the back of it and then the front.

"It has not been through the post." he said to the Abbé, who stood respectfully watching his face, which, indeed, inspired little confidence, for the chin receded in the wrong way—not like the chin of a shark, which indicates, not foolishness, but greed of gain—and the eyes were large and pale like those of a sheep.

"Oh, Heaven forbid!" cried the Abbé. "Such a letter as that! Where should we all be if it were read by the government? And all know that letters passing through the post to the address of such as Monsieur Albert are read in passing—by the Prince President himself, as likely as not."

Albert gave a short, derisive laugh, and shrugged his shoulders, which made his admiring mother throw back her head with a gesture, inviting the Abbé to contemplate, with satisfaction, the mother of so brave a man.

"*Voilà*," she said, "but tell us, my son, what is in the letter?"

"Not yet," was the reply. "It is to be read to all when they are assembled. In the mean time——"

He did not finish the sentence in words, but by gesture conveyed that the missive, now folded and placed in his breast-pocket, was only to be obtained bespattered with his life's blood. And the Abbé wiped his clammy brow with some satisfaction that it should be thus removed from his own timorous custody.

Albert de Chantonnay was looking expectantly at the door, for he had heard footsteps, and now he bowed gravely

to a very old gentleman, a notary of the town, who entered the room with a deep obeisance to the Comtesse. Close on the notary's heels came others. Some were in riding costume, and came from a distance.

One sprightly lady wore evening dress, only partially concealed by a cloak. She hurried in with a nod for Albert de Chantonnay, and a kiss for the Comtesse. Her presence had the immediate effect of imparting an air of practical common-sense energy to the assembly, which it had hitherto lacked. There was nothing of the old *régime* in this lady, who seemed to over-ride etiquette, and cheerfully ignore the dramatic side of the proceedings.

"Is it not wonderful?" she whispered aloud, after the manner of any modern lady at one of those public meetings in which they take so large a part with so small a result in these later days. "Is it not wonderful?" And her French, though pure enough, was full and round—the French of an English tongue. "I have had a long letter from Dormer telling me all about it. Oh—" And she broke off, silenced by the dark frown of Albert de Chantonnay, to which her attention had been forcibly directed by his mother. "I have been dining with Madame de Rathe," she went on, irrepressibly, changing the subject in obedience to Albert de Chantonnay's frown. "The Vicomtesse bids me make her excuses. She feared an indigestion, so will be absent to-night."

"Ah!" returned the Comtesse de Chantonnay. "It is not that. I happen to know that the Vicomtesse de Rathe has the digestion of a schoolboy. It is because she has no confidence in Albert. But we shall see—we shall see. It is not for the nobility of Louis Philippe to—to have a poor digestion."

And the Comtesse de Chantonnay made a gesture and a

meaning grimace which would have been alarming enough had her hand and face been less dimpled with good nature.

There were now assembled about a dozen persons, and the Abbé was kept in countenance by two others of his cloth. There were several ladies; one of whom was young and plain and seemed to watch Albert de Chantonnay with a timid awe. Mrs. St. Pierre Lawrence, seated next to the Comtesse de Chantonnay, was the only lady who made any attempt at gay apparel, and thus stood rather conspicuous among her companions clad in sober and somewhat rusty black. All over the west of France such meetings of the penniless Royalists were being held at this time, not, it has been averred, without the knowledge of the Prince President, who has been credited with the courage to treat the matter with contempt. About no monarch, living or dead, however, have so many lies been written, by friend or foe, with good or ill intent, as about him, who subsequently carried out the astounding feat of climbing to the throne of France as Napoleon III. And it seems certain that he has been given credit for knowing much of which he must have been ignorant to an extent hardly credible, even now, in face of subsequent events.

The Comtesse de Chantonnay was still tossing her head, at intervals, at the recollection of the Vicomtesse de Rathe's indigestion. This was only typical of the feelings that divided every camp in France at this time—at any time, indeed, since the days of Charlemagne—for the French must always quarrel among themselves until they are actually on the brink of national catastrophe. And even when they are fallen into that pit they will quarrel at the bottom, and bespatter each other with the mud that is there.

"Are we all here?" asked Albert de Chantonnay, standing in an effective attitude at the end of the table,

with his hand on the back of his chair. He counted the number of his fellow-conspirators, and then sat down, drawing forward a candelabra.

"You have been summoned in haste," he said, "by the request of the Marquis de Gemosac to listen to the perusal of a letter of importance. It may be of the utmost importance—to us—to France—to all the world."

He drew the letter from his pocket and opened it amid a breathless silence. His listeners noted the care with which he attended to gesture and demeanour, and accounted it to him for righteousness; for they were French. An English audience would have thought him insincere, and they would have been wrong.

"The letter is dated from a place called Farlingford, in England. I have never heard of it. It is nowhere near to Twickenham or Clarement, nor is it in Buckinghamshire. The rest of England—no one knows." Albert paused and held up one hand for silence.

"At last," he read—"at last, my friends, after a lifetime of fruitless search, it seems that I have found—through the good offices of Dormer Colville—not the man we have sought, but his son. We have long suspected that Louis XVII. must be dead. Madame herself, in her exile at Frohsdorff, has admitted to her intimates that she no longer hoped. But here in the full vigour of youth—a sailor, strong and healthy, living a simple life on shore as at sea—I have found a man whose face, whose form, and manner would clearly show to the most incredulous that he could be no other than the son of Louis XVII. A hundred tricks of manner and gesture he has inherited from the father he scarce remembers, from the grandfather who perished on the guillotine many years before he himself was born. No small proof of the man's sincerity is the fact that only now,

after long persuasion, has he consented to place himself in our hands. I thought of hurrying at once to Frohsdorff to present to the aged Duchess a youth whom she cannot fail to recognize as her nephew. But better counsels have prevailed. Dormer Colville, to whom we owe so much, has placed us in his farther debt for a piece of sage advice. 'Wait,' he advises, 'until the young man has learned what is expected of him, until he has made the personal acquaintance of his supporters. Reserve until the end the presentation to the Duchesse d'Angoulême, which must only be made when all the Royalists in France are ready to act with a unanimity which will be absolute, and an energy which must prove irresistible.'

"There are more material proofs than a face so strongly resembling that of Louis XVI. and Monsieur d'Artois, in their early manhood, as to take the breath away; than a vivacity inherited from his grandmother, together with an independence of spirit and impatience of restraint; than the slight graceful form, blue eyes, and fair skin of the little prisoner of the Temple. There are dates which go to prove that this boy's father was rescued from a sinking fishing-boat, near Dieppe, a few days after the little Dauphin was known to have escaped from the Temple, and to have been hurried to the north coast disguised as a girl. There is evidence, which Monsieur Colville is now patiently gathering from these slow-speaking people, that the woman who was rescued with this child was not his mother. And there are a hundred details known to the villagers here which go to prove what we have always suspected to be the case, namely, that Louis XVII. was rescued from the Temple by the daring and ingenuity of a devoted few who so jealously guarded their secret that they frustrated their own object; for they one and all must have perished on the guillotine, or

at the hands of some other assassin, without divulging their knowledge, and in the confusion and horror of those days the little Dauphin was lost to sight.

"There is a trinket—a locket—containing a miniature, which I am assured is a portrait of Marie Antoinette. This locket is in the possession of Dormer Colville, who suggests that we should refrain from using violence to open it until this can be done in France in the presence of suitable witnesses. A fall or some mishap has so crushed the locket that it can only be opened by a jeweller provided with suitable instruments. It has remained closed for nearly a quarter of a century, but a reliable witness in whose possession it has been since he, who was undoubtedly Louis XVII., died in his arms, remembers the portrait, and has no doubt of its authenticity. I have told you enough to make it clear to you that my search is at last ended. What we require now is money to enable us to bring this King of France to his own; to bring him, in the first place, to my humble château of Gemosac, where he can lie hidden until all arrangements are made. I leave it to you, my dear Albert, to collect this preliminary sum."

De Chantonnay folded the letter and looked at the faces surrounding the dimly lighted table.

Mrs. St. Pierre Lawrence, who must have known the contents of the letter, and, therefore, came provided, leaned across the table with a discreet clink of jewellery and laid before Albert de Chantonnay a note for a thousand francs.

"I am only an Englishwoman," she said, simply, "but I can help."

CHAPTER XII

THE SECRET OF GEMOSAC

THERE is no sentiment so artificial as international hatred. In olden days it owed its existence to churchmen, and now an irresponsible press foments that dormant antagonism. Wherever French and English individuals are thrown together by a common endeavour, both are surprised at the mutual esteem which soon develops into friendship. But as nations we are no nearer than we were in the great days of Napoleon.

Mrs. St. Pierre Lawrence was only one-quarter French and three-quarters English. Her grandmother had been a St. Pierre ; but it was not from that lady that she inherited a certain open-handedness which took her French friends by surprise.

"It is not that she has the cause at heart," commented Madame de Chantonnay, as she walked laboriously on Albert's arm down the ramp of the Château de Gemosac at the termination of the meeting. "It is not for that that she throws her note of a thousand francs upon the table and promises more when things are in train. It is because she can refuse nothing to Dormer Colville. *Allez*, my son ! I have a woman's heart ! I know ! "

Albert contented himself with a sardonic laugh. He

was not in the humour to talk of women's hearts ; for Mrs. St. Pierre Lawrence's action had struck a sudden note of British realism into the harmony of his political fancies. He had talked so much, had listened to so much talk from others, that the dream of a restored monarchy had at last been raised to those far realms of the barely possible in which the Gallic fancy wanders in moments of facile digestion.

It was sufficient for the emergency that the others present at the meeting could explain that one does not carry money in one's pocket in a country lane at night. But in their hearts all were conscious of a slight feeling of resentment toward Mrs. St. Pierre Lawrence ; of a vague sense of disappointment, such as a dreamer may experience on being roughly awakened.

The three priests folded their hands with complacency. Poverty, their most cherished possession, spoke for itself in their case. The notary blinked and fumbled at his lips with yellow fingers in hasty thought. He was a Royalist notary because there existed in the country of the Deux Sèvres a Royalist *clientèle*. In France, even a washerwoman must hold political views and stand or fall by them. It was astounding how poor every one felt at that moment, and it rested, as usual, with a woman's intuition to grasp the only rope within reach. "The vintage," this lady murmured. The vintage promised to be a bad one. Nothing, assuredly, could be undertaken, and no promise made, until the vintage was over.

So the meeting broke up without romance, and the conspirators dispersed to their homes, carrying in their minds that mutual distrust which is ever awakened in human hearts by the chink of gold, while the dormant national readiness to detect betrayal by England was suddenly wide awake.

Nevertheless, Mrs. St. Pierre Lawrence had supplied the one ingredient necessary to leaven the talk of these dreamers into action. Even the notary found himself compelled to contribute when Albert de Chantonnay asked him outright for a subscription. And the priests, ably led by the Abbé Touvent, acted after the manner of the sons of Levi since olden times. They did not give themselves, but they told others to give, which is far better.

In due course the money was sent to England. It was the plain truth that the Marquis de Gemosac had not sufficient in his pocket to equip Loo Barebone with the clothes necessary to a seemly appearance in France ; or, indeed, to cover the expense of the journey thither. Dormer Colville never had money to spare. "Heaven shaped me for a rich man," he would say, lightly, whenever the momentous subject was broached, "but forgot to fill my pockets."

It was almost the time of the vintage, and the country roads were dotted with the shambling figures of those knights of industry who seem to spring from the hedgerows at harvest-time in any country in the world, when the Abbé Touvent sought out Marie in her cottage at the gates of the château.

"*A la cave*," answered the lady's voice. "In the cellar—do you not know that it is Monday and I wash ?"

The Abbé did not repeat his summons on the kitchen table with the handle of his stick, but drew forward a chair.

"I know it is very hot, and that I am tired," he shouted toward the cellar door, which stood open, giving egress to a warm smell of soap.

"Precisely—and does Monsieur l'Abbé want me to come up as I am ?"

The suggestion was darkly threatening, and the Abbé

replied that Marie must take her time, since it was washing-day.

The cottage was built on sloping ground at the gate of the château, probably of the stones used for some earlier fortification. That which Marie called the cellar was but half underground, and had an exit to the garden which grew to the edge of the cliff. It was not long before she appeared at the head of the stone steps, a square-built woman with a face that had been sunburnt long ago by work in the vineyards, and eyes looking straight at the world from beneath a square and wrinkled forehead.

"Monsieur l'Abbé," she said, shortly—a salutation and a comment in one; for it conveyed the fact that she saw it was he and perceived that he was in his usual health. "It is news from Monsieur, I suppose," she added, slowly, turning down her sleeves.

"Yes, the Marquis writes that he is on his way to Gemosac and wishes you to prepare the château for his return."

The Abbé waved his hand toward the castle gates with an air suggestive of retainers and lackeys, of busy stables and a hundred windows lighted after dark. His round eyes did not meet the direct glance fixed on his face, but wandered from one object to another in the room, finally lighting on the great key of the château gate, which hung on a nail behind the door.

"Then Monsieur le Marquis is coming into residence," said Marie, gravely.

And by way of reply the Abbé waved his hand a second time toward the castle walls.

"And the worst of it is," he added, timidly, to this silent admission, "that he brings a guest."

He moistened his fat lips and sat smiling in a foolish

way at the open door; for he was afraid of all women, and most afraid of Marie.

"Ah!" she retorted, shortly. "To sleep in the oubliette, one may suppose. For there is no other bed in the château, as you quite well know, Monsieur l'Abbé. It is another of your kings no doubt. Oh! you need not hold up your hands—when Monsieur Albert reads aloud that letter from Monsieur le Marquis, in England, without so much as closing the door of the banquet hall! It is as well that it was no other than I who stood on the stairs outside and heard all."

"But it is wrong to listen behind doors," protested the Abbé.

"Ah, bah!" replied this unregenerate sheep of his flock. "But do not alarm yourself, Monsieur l'Abbé, I can keep a quiet tongue. And a political secret—what is it? It is an amusement for the rich—your politics—but a vice for the poor. Come, let us go to the château, while there is still day, and you can see for yourself whether we are ready for a guest."

While she spoke she hastily completed a toilet, which, despite the Abbé's caution, had the appearance of incompleteness, and taking the great key from behind the door, led the way out into the glare of the setting sun. She unlocked the great gate and threw her weight against it with quick, firm movements like the movements of a man. Indeed, she was a better man than her companion; of a stronger common sense; with lither limbs and a stouter heart; the best man that France has latterly produced, and, so far as the student of racial degeneration may foretell, will ever produce again—her middle-class woman.

Built close against the flanking tower on the left hand of the courtyard was a low, square house of two stories only.

The whole ground floor was stabling, room and to spare for half a hundred horses, and filled frequently enough, no doubt, in the great days of the Great Henry. On the first floor, to which three or four staircases gave access, there were plenty of apartments; indeed, suites of them. But nearly all stood empty, and the row of windows looked blank and curtainless across the crumbling garden to the Italian house.

It was one of the many tragedies of that smiling, sunny land where only man, it seems, is vile; for nature has enclosed within its frontier-lines all the varied wealth and beauty of her treasures.

Marie led the way up the first staircase, which was straight and narrow. The carpet, carefully rolled and laid aside on the landing, was threadbare and colourless. The muslin curtains, folded back and pinned together, were darned and yellow with frequent washing and the rust of ancient damp. She opened the door of the first room at the head of the stairs. It had once been the apartment of some servitor; now it contained furniture of the gorgeous days of Louis XIV., with all the colour gone from its tapestry, all the woodwork grey and worm-eaten.

"Not that one," said Marie, as the Abbé struggled with the lever that fastened the window. "That one has not been opened for many years. See! the glass rattles in the frame. It is the other that opens."

Without comment the Abbé opened the other window and threw back the shutters, from which all the paint had peeled away, and let in the scented air. Mignonette close at hand—which had bloomed and died and cast its seed amid the old walls and falling stones since Marie Antoinette had taught the women of France to take an interest in their gardens; and from the great plains beyond—flat and fat—

carefully laid there by the Garonne to give the world its finest wines, rose up the subtle scent of vines in bloom.

"The drawing-room," said Marie, and making a mock-curtsey toward the door, which stood open to the dim stairs, she made a grand gesture with her hand, still red and wrinkled from the wash-tub. "Will the King of France be pleased to enter and seat himself? There are three chairs, but one of them is broken, so his Majesty's suite must stand."

With a strident laugh she passed on to the next room through folding doors.

"The principal room," she announced, with that hard irony in her voice, which had, no doubt, penetrated thither from the soul of a mother who had played no small part in the Revolution. "The guest-chamber, one may say, provided that Monsieur le Marquis will sleep on the floor in the drawing-room, or in the straw down below in the stable."

The Abbé threw open the shutter of this room also and stood meekly eyeing Marie with a tolerant smile. The room was almost bare of furniture. A bed such as peasants sleep on; a few chairs; a dressing-table tottering against the window-breast, and modestly screened in one corner, the diminutive washing-stand still used in southern France. For Gemosac had been sacked and the furniture built up into a bonfire when Marie was a little child and the Abbé Touvent a fat-faced timorous boy at the Seminary of Saintes.

"Beyond is Mademoiselle's room," concluded Marie, curtly. She looked round her and shrugged her shoulders with a grim laugh which made the Abbé shrink. They looked at each other in silence, the two participants in the secret of Gemosac; for Marie's husband, the third who had access to the château, did not count. He was a shambling,

silent man, now working in the vineyard beneath the walls. He always did what his wife told him, without comment or enthusiasm, knowing well that he would be blamed for doing it badly.

The Abbé had visited the rooms once before, during a brief passage of the Marquis, soon after his wife's death in Paris. But, as a rule, only Marie and Jean had access to the apartment. He looked round with an eye always ready with the tear of sympathy ; for he was a soft-hearted man. Then he looked at Marie again, shamefacedly. But she, divining his thoughts, shrugged her shoulders.

" Ah, bah ! " she said, " one must take the world as it is. And Monsieur le Marquis is only a man. One sees that, when he announces his return on washing-day, and brings a guest. You must write to him, that is all, and tell him that with time I can arrange, but not in a hurry like this. Where is the furniture to come from ? A chair or two from the banquet-hall ; I can lend a bed which Jean can carry in after dark so that no one knows ; you have the jug and basin you bought when the Bishop came, that you must lend— " She broke off and ran to the window. " Good," she cried, in a despairing voice, " I hear a carriage coming up the hill. Run, Monsieur l'Abbé—run to the gate and bolt it. Guest or no guest, they cannot see the rooms like this. Here, let me past."

She pushed him unceremoniously aside at the head of the stairs and ran past him. Long concealment of the deadly poverty within the walls had taught her to close the gates behind her whenever she entered, but now for greater security, or to gain time, she swung the great oaken beam round on its pivot across the doors on the inside. Then turning round on her heels she watched the bell that hung above her head. The Abbé, who had followed her as

quickly as he could, was naïvely looking for a peep-hole between the timbers of the huge doors.

A minute later the bell swung slowly, and gave a single clang which echoed beneath the vaulted roof, and in the hollow of the empty towers on either side.

"Marie, Marie!" cried a gay girlish voice from without. "Open at once. It is I."

"There," said Marie, in a whisper. "It is Mademoiselle, who has returned from the good Sisters. And the story that you told of the fever at Saintes is true."

CHAPTER XIII

WITHIN THE GATES

THE great bell hanging inside the gates of Gemosac was silent for two days after the return of Juliette de Gemosac from her fever-stricken convent school, at Saintes.

But on the third day, soon after nightfall, it rang once more, breaking suddenly in on the silence of the shadowy courts and gardens, bidding the frogs in the tank be still with a soft, clear voice, only compassed by the artificers who worked in days when silver was little accounted of in the forging of a bell.

It was soon after eight o'clock, and darkness had not long covered the land and sent the workers home. There was no moon. Indeed, the summons to the gate, coming so soon after nightfall, seemed to suggest the arrival of a traveller, who had not deemed it expedient to pass through the winding streets of Gemosac by daylight.

The castle lies on a height, sufficiently removed from the little town to temper the stir of its streets to a pleasant and unobtrusive evidence of neighbourhood. Had the traveller come in a carriage, the sound of its wheels would certainly have been heard; and nearer at hand, the tramp of horses on the hollow of the old drawbridge, not raised these hundred years, must have heralded the summons of the bell.

But none of these sounds had warned Juliette de Gemosac, who sat alone in the little white room upstairs, nor Marie and her husband, dumb and worn by the day's toil, who awaited bedtime on a stone seat by the stable door.

Juliette, standing at the open window, heard Jean stir himself, and shuffle, in his slippers, toward the gate.

"It is some one who comes on foot," she heard Marie say. "Some beggar—the roads are full of them. See that he gets no farther than the gate."

She heard Jean draw back the bolts and answer gruffly, in a few words, through the interstice of a grudging door, what seemed to be inquiries made in a voice that was not the voice of a peasant. Marie rose and went to the gate. In a few minutes they returned, and Juliette drew back from the window, for they were accompanied by the new-comer, whose boots made a sharper, clearer sound on the cobble-stones.

"Yes," Juliette heard him explain, "I am an Englishman, but I come from Monsieur de Gemosac, for all that. And since Mademoiselle is here, I must see her. It was by chance that I heard, on the road, that there is fever at Saintes, and that she had returned home. I was on my way to Saintes to see her and give her my news of her father."

"But what news?" asked Marie, and the answer was lost as the speakers passed into the doorway, the new-comer evidently leading the way, the peasant and his wife following without protest, and with that instinctive obedience to unconscious command which will survive all the iconoclasm of a hundred revolutions.

There followed a tramping on the stairs and a half-suppressed laugh as the new-comer stumbled upward. Marie opened the door slowly.

"It is a gentleman," she announced, "who does not give his name."

Juliette de Gemosac was standing at the far side of the table, with the lamp throwing its full light upon her. She was dressed in white, with a blue ribbon at her waist and wrists. Another ribbon of the same colour tied back her hair, which was of a bright brown, with curls that caught the light in a score of tendrils above her ears. No finished coquette could have planned a prettier surprise than that which awaited Loo Barebone, as he made Marie stand aside, and came, hat in hand, into the room.

He paused for an instant, breathless, before Juliette, who stood, with a little smile of composed surprise parting her lips. This child, fresh from the quiet of a convent-school, was in no wise taken aback nor at a loss how to act. She did not speak, but stood with head erect, not ungracious, looking at him with clear brown eyes, awaiting his explanation. And Loo Barebone, all untaught, who had never spoken to a French lady in his life, came forward with an assurance and a readiness which must have lain dormant in his blood, awaiting the magic of this moment.

"Since my name would convey nothing to Mademoiselle," he said, with a bow which he had assuredly not learnt in Farlingford, "it was useless to mention it. But it is at the disposal of Mademoiselle, nevertheless. It is an English name —Barebone. I am the Englishman who has been fortunate enough to engage the interest of your father, who journeyed to England to find me—and found me."

He broke off with a laugh, spreading out his arms to show himself, as it were, and ask indulgence.

"I have a heritage, it appears, in France," he went on, "but know nothing of it, yet. For the weather has been bad and our voyage a stormy one. I was to have been told during the journey, but we had no time for that. And I know no more than you, mademoiselle."

Juliette had changed colour, and her cheeks, which were usually of a most delicate pink, were suddenly quite white. She did not touch upon the knowledge to which he referred, but went past it to its object.

"You do not speak like an Englishman," she said. "For I know one or two. One came to the school at Saintes. He was a famous English prelate, and he had the manner—well, of a tree. And when he spoke, it was what one would expect of a tree, if it suddenly had speech. But you—you are not like that."

Loo Barebone laughed with an easy gaiety, which seemed infectious, though Marie did not join in it, but stood scowling in the doorway.

"Yes," he said, "you have described them exactly. I know a hundred who are like great trees. Many are so, but they are kind and still like trees—the English, when you know them, mademoiselle."

"They?" she said, with her prettily arched eyebrows raised high.

"We, I mean," he answered, quickly, taking her meaning in a flash. "I almost forgot that I was an Englishman. It is my heritage, perhaps, that makes me forget—or yourself. It is so easy and natural to consider one's self a Frenchman—and so pleasant."

Marie shuffled with her feet and made a movement of impatience, as if to remind them that they were still far from the business in hand and were merely talking of themselves, which is the beginning of all things—or may be the beginning of the inevitable end.

"But I forgot," said Barebone, at once. "And it is getting late. Your father has had a slight misfortune. He has sprained his ankle. He is on board my ship, the ship of which I am—I have been—an officer, lying at anchor in

the river near here, off the village of Mortagne. I came from Mortagne at your father's request, with certain messages, for yourself, mademoiselle, and for Marie—if Madame is Marie."

"Yes," replied the grim voice in the doorway. "Madame is Marie."

Loo had turned toward her. It seemed his happy fate to be able to disarm antagonism at the first pass. He looked at Marie and smiled; and slowly, unwillingly, her grim face relaxed.

"Well," he said, "you are not to expect Monsieur le Marquis to-night, nor yet, for some time to come. For he will go on to Bordeaux, where he can obtain skilled treatment for his injured ankle, and remain there until he can put his foot to the ground. He is comfortable enough on board the ship, which will proceed up the river to-morrow morning to Bordeaux. Monsieur le Marquis also told me to set your mind at rest on another point. He was to have brought with him a guest—— "

Loo paused and bowed to Marie, with a gay grace.

"A humble one. But I am not to come to Gemosac just now. I am going, instead, with Monsieur Dormer Colville, to stay at Royan with Mrs. St. Pierre Lawrence. It is, I hope, a pleasure deferred. I cannot, it appears, show myself in Bordeaux at present, and I quit the ship to-night. It is some question of myself and my heritage in France, which I do not understand."

"Is that so?" said Marie. "One can hardly believe it."

"What do you mean?"

"Oh, nothing," replied Marie, looking at his face with a close scrutiny, as if it were familiar to her.

"And that is all that I had to tell you, Madame Marie," concluded Barebone.

And, strangely enough, Marie smiled at him as he turned away, not unkindly.

"To you, mademoiselle," he went on, turning again to Juliette, whose hand was at her hair, for she had been taken by surprise, "my message is simpler. Monsieur, your father, will be glad to have your society at Bordeaux, while he stays there, if that is true which the Gironde pilot told him—of fever at Saintes, and the hurried dispersal of the schools."

"It is true enough, monsieur," answered Juliette, in her low-pitched voice of the south, and with a light of anticipation in her eye; for it was dull enough at Gemosac, all alone in this empty château. "But how am I to reach Bordeaux?"

"Your father did not specify the route or method. He seemed to leave that to you, mademoiselle. He seemed to have an entire faith in your judgment, and that is why I was so surprised when I saw you. I thought—well, I figured to myself that you were older, you understand."

He broke off with a laugh and a deprecatory gesture of the hand, as if he had more in his mind but did not want to put it into words. His meaning was clear enough in his eyes, but Juliette was fresh from a convent-school, where they seek earnestly to teach a woman not to be a woman.

"One may be young, and still have understanding, monsieur," she said, with the composed little smile on her demure lips, which must only have been the composure of complete innocence: almost a monopoly of children, though some women move through life without losing it.

"Yes," answered Loo, looking into her eyes. "So it appears. So, how will you go to Bordeaux? How does one go from Gemosac to Bordeaux?"

"By carriage to Mortagne, where a boat is always to be

obtained. It is a short journey, if the tide is favourable," broke in Marie, who was practical before she was polite.

"Then," said Loo, as quick as thought, "drive back with me now to Mortagne. I have left my horse in the town, my boat at the pier at Mortagne. It is an hour's drive. In an hour and a half you will be on board 'The Last Hope,' at anchor in the river. There is accommodation on board for both you and Madame; for I, alas! leave the ship to-night with Monsieur Colville, and thus vacate two cabins."

Juliette reflected for a moment, but she did not consult, even by a glance, Marie; who, in truth, appeared to expect no such confidences, but awaited the decision with a grim and grudging servitude which was as deeply pressed in upon her soul as was the habit of command in the soul of a de Gemosac.

"Yes," said Juliette, at length, "that will be best. It is, of course, important that my father should reach Bordeaux as soon as possible."

"He will be there at midday to-morrow, if you will come with me now," answered Loo, and his gay eyes said "Come!" as clearly as his lips, though Juliette could not, of course, be expected to read such signals.

The affair was soon settled, and Jean ordered to put the horse into the high, old-fashioned carriage still in use at the château. For Juliette de Gemosac seemed to be an illustration of the fact, known to many much-tried parents, that one is never too young to know one's mind.

"There is a thunder-storm coming from the sea," was Jean's only comment.

There was some delay in starting; for Marie had to change her own clothes as well as pack her young mistress's simple trunks. But the time did not hang heavily on the

hands of the two waiting in the little drawing-room, and Marie turned an uneasy glance toward the open door more than once at the sound of their laughter.

Barebone was riding a horse hired in the village of Mortagne, and quitted the château first, on foot, saying that the carriage must necessarily travel quicker than he, as his horse was tired. The night was dark, and darkest to the west, where lightning danced in and out among heavy clouds over the sea.

As in all lands that have been torn hither and thither by long wars, the peasants of Guienne learnt, long ago, the wisdom of dwelling together in closely built villages, making a long journey to their fields or vineyards every day. In times past, Gemosac had been a walled town, dominated, as usual, by the almost impregnable castle.

Barebone rode on, alone, through the deserted vineyards, of which the scent, like that of a vinery in colder lands, was heavy and damp. The road runs straight, from point to point, and there was no chance of missing the way or losing his companions. He was more concerned with watching the clouds, which were rising in dark towers against the western sky. He had noted that others were watching them, also, standing at their doors in every street. It was the period of thunder and hailstorms—the deadly foe of the vine.

At length Barebone pulled up and waited ; for he could hear the sound of wheels behind him, and noted that it was not increasing in loudness.

" Can you not go faster ? " he shouted to Jean, when, at length, the carriage approached.

Jean made no answer, but lashed his horse and pointed upward to the sky with his whip. Barebone rode in front to encourage the slower horse. At the village of Mortagne

he signed to Jean to wait before the inn until he had taken his horse to the stable and paid for its hire. Then he clambered to the box beside him and they rattled down the long street and out into the open road that led across the marshes to the port—a few wooden houses and a jetty, running out from the shallows to the channel.

When they reached the jetty, going slowly at the last through the heavy dust, the air was still and breathless. The rounded clouds still towered above them, making the river black with their deep shadows. A few lights twinkled across the waters. They were the lightships marking the middle bank of the Gironde, which is many miles wide at this spot and rendered dangerous by innumerable sand-banks.

"In five minutes it will be upon us," said Jean. "You had better turn back."

"Oh, no," was the reply, with a reassuring laugh. "In the country where I come from they do not turn back."

CHAPTER XIV

THE LIFTED VEIL

"WHERE is the boatman?" asked Marie, as she followed Juliette and Barebone along the deserted jetty. A light burnt dimly at the end of it and one or two boats must have been moored near at hand; for the water could be heard lapping under their bows, a secretive, whispering sound full of mystery.

"I am the boatman," replied Loo, over his shoulder. "Are you afraid?"

"What is the good of being afraid?" asked this woman of the world, stopping at the head of the steps and peering down into the darkness into which he had descended. "What is the good of being afraid when one is old and married? I was afraid enough when I was a girl, and pretty and coquette like Mademoiselle, here. I was afraid enough then, and it was worth my while—*allez!*"

Barebone made no answer to this dark suggestion of a sprightly past. The present darkness and the coming storm commanded his full attention. In the breathless silence, Juliette and Marie—and behind them, Jean, panting beneath the luggage balanced on his shoulder—could hear the wet rope slipping through his fingers and, presently, the bump of the heavy boat against the timber of the steps.

This was followed by the gurgle of a rope through a

well-greased sheave and the square lug, which had been the joy of little Sep Marvin at Farlingford, crept up to the truck of the stubby mast.

"There is no wind for that," remarked Marie, pessimistically.

"There will be to spare in a few minutes," answered Barebone, and the monosyllabic Jean gave an acquiescent grunt.

"Luggage first," said Barebone, lapsing into the curtness of the sea. "Come along. Let us make haste."

They stumbled on board as best they could, and were guided to a safe place amidships by Loo, who had thrown a spare sail on the bottom of the boat.

"As low as you can," he said. "Crouch down. Cover yourselves with this. Right over your heads."

"But why?" grumbled Marie.

"Listen," was all the answer he gave her. And as he spoke, the storm rushed upon them like a train, with the roar and whirl of a locomotive.

Loo jumped aft to the tiller. In the rush of the hail, they heard him give a sharp order to Jean, who must have had some knowledge of the sea, for he obeyed at once, and the boat, set free, lurched forward with a flap of her sail, which was like the report of a cannon. For a moment, all seemed confusion and flapping chaos, then came a sense of tenseness, and the boat heeled over with a swish, which added a hundred-weight of solid water to the beating of the hail on the spare sail, beneath which the women crouched.

"What? Did you speak?" shouted Loo, putting his face close to the canvas.

"It is only Marie calling on the saints," was the answer, in Juliette's laughing voice.

In a few minutes it was over; and, even at the back of

the winds, could be heard the retreat of the hail as it crashed onward toward the valleys of which every slope is a named vineyard, to beat down in a few wild moments the result of careful toil and far-sighted expenditure ; to wipe out that which is unique, which no man can replace—the vintage of a year.

When the hail ceased beating on it, Juliette pushed back the soaked canvas, which had covered them like a roof, and lifted her face to the cooler air. The boat was rushing through the water, and close to Juliette's cheek, just above the gunwale, rose a curved wave, green and white, and all shimmering with phosphorescence, which seemed to hover like a hawk above its prey.

The aftermath of the storm was flying overhead in riven ribbons of cloud, through which the stars were already peeping. To the westward the sky was clear, and against the last faint glow of the departed sun the lightning ran hither and thither, skipping and leaping, without sound or cessation, like fairies dancing.

Immediately overhead, the sail creaked and tugged at its earings, while the wind sang its high clear song round mast and halliards.

Juliette turned to look at Barebone. He was standing, ankle deep, in water, leaning backward to windward, in order to give the boat every pound of weight he could. The lambent summer-lightning on the western horizon illuminated his face fitfully. In that moment Juliette saw what is given to few to see and realise—though sailors, perforce, lie down to sleep knowing it every night—that under Heaven her life was wholly and solely in the two hands of a fellow-being. She knew it, and saw that Barebone knew it, though he never glanced at her. She saw the whites of his eyes gleaming as he looked up, from moment to moment, to

the head of the sail and stooped again to peer under the foot of it into the darkness ahead. He braced himself, with one foot against the thwart, to haul in a few inches of sheet, to which the clumsy boat answered immediately. Marie was praying aloud now, and when she opened her eyes the sight of the tossing figure in the stern of the boat suddenly turned her terror into anger.

"Ah!" she cried, "that Jean is a fool. And he, who pretends to have been a fisherman when he was young—to let us come to our deaths like this!"

She lifted her head, and ducked it again, as a sea jumped up under the bow and rattled into the boat.

"I see no ship," she cried. "Let us go back, if we can. Name of God!—we shall be drowned! I see no ship, I tell you!"

"But I do," answered Barebone, shaking the water from his face, for he had no hand to spare. "But I do, which is more important. And you are not even wet!"

And he laughed as he brought the boat up into the wind for a few seconds, to meet a wild gust. Juliette turned in surprise at the sound of his voice. In the safe and gentle seclusion of the convent-school no one had thought to teach her that death may be faced with equanimity by others than the ordained of the Church, and that in the storm and stress of life men laugh in strange places and at odd times.

Loo was only thinking of his boat and watching the sky for the last of the storm—that smack, as it were, in the face—with which the Atlantic ends those black squalls that she sends us, not without thunder and the curtailed lightning of northern seas. He was planning and shaping his course; for the watchers on board "The Last Hope" had already seen him, as he could ascertain by a second light, which suddenly appeared, swung low, casting a gleam across

the surf-strewn water, to show him where the ladder hung overside.

"Tell Monsieur de Gemosac that I have Mademoiselle and her maid here in the boat," Barebone called out to Captain Clubbe, whose large face loomed above the lantern he was holding overside, as he made fast the rope that had been thrown across his boat and lowered the dripping sail. The water was smooth enough under the lee of "The Last Hope," which, being deeply laden, lay motionless at her anchor, with the stream rustling past her cables.

"Stand up, mademoiselle," said Barebone, himself balanced on the after-thwart. "Hold on to me, thus, and when I let you go, let yourself go."

There was no time to protest or to ask questions. And Juliette felt herself passed on from one pair of strong arms to another, until she was standing on the deck under the humming rigging, surrounded by men who seemed huge in their gleaming oil-skins.

"This way, mademoiselle," said one, who was even larger than the others, in English, of which she understood enough to catch his meaning. "I will take you to your father. Show a light this way, one of you."

His fingers closed round her arm, and he led her, unconscious of a strength that almost lifted her from her feet, toward an open door, where a lamp burnt dimly within. It smelt abominably of an untrimmed wick, Juliette thought, and the next minute she was kissing her father, who lay full length on a locker in the little cabin.

She asked him a hundred questions, and waited for few of the answers. Indeed, she supplied most of them herself; for she was very quick and gay.

"I see," she cried, "that your foot has been tied up by a sailor. He has tried to mend it as if it were a broken

spar. I suppose that was the Captain who brought me to you, and then ran away again, as soon as he could. Yes; I have Marie with me. She is telling them to be careful with the luggage. I can hear her. I am so glad we had a case of fever at the school. It was a lay sister, a stupid woman. But how lucky that I should be at home just when you wanted me!"

She stood upright again, after deftly loosening the bandage round her father's ankle, and looked at him and laughed.

"Poor, dear old papa," she said. "One sees that you want some one to take care of you. And this cabin—oh! *mon Dieu!* how bare and uncomfortable! I suppose men have to go to sea alone because they can persuade no woman to go with them."

She pounced upon her father again, and arranged afresh the cushions behind his back, with a little air of patronage and protection. Her back was turned toward the door, when some one came in, but she heard the approaching steps and looked quickly round the cabin walls.

"Heavens!" she exclaimed, in a gay whisper. "No looking-glass! One sees that it is only men who live here."

And she turned, with smiling eyes and a hand upraised to her disordered hair, to note the new-comer. It was Dormer Colville, who laid aside his waterproof as he came and greeted her as an old friend. He had, indeed, known her since her early childhood, and had always succeeded in keeping pace with her, even in the rapid changes of her last year at school.

"Here is an adventure," he said, shaking hands. "But I can see that you have taken no harm, and have not even been afraid. For us, it is a pleasant surprise."

He glanced at her with a smiling approbation, not

without a delicate suggestion of admiration, such as he might well permit himself, and she might now even consider her due. He was only keeping pace.

"I stayed behind to initiate your maid, who is, of course, unused to a ship, and the steward speaks but little French. But now they are arranging your cabin together."

"How delightful!" cried Juliette. "I have never been on a ship before, you know. And it is all so strange and so nice. All those big men, like wet ghosts, who said nothing! I think they are more interesting than women; perhaps it is because they talk less."

"Perhaps it is," admitted Colville, with a sudden gravity, similar to that with which she had made the suggestion.

"You should hear the Sisters talk—when they are allowed," she said, confidentially.

"And whisper when they are not. I can imagine it," laughed Colville. "But now you have left all that behind, and have come out into the world—of men, one may say. And you have begun at once with an adventure."

"Yes! And we are going to Bordeaux, papa and I, until his foot is well again. Of course, I was in despair when I was first told of it, but now that I see him I am no longer anxious. And your messenger assured me that it was not serious."

She paused to look round the cabin, to make sure that they were alone.

"How strange he is!" she said to both her hearers, in confidence, looking from one to the other with a quick, bird-like turn of the head and bright eyes. "I have never seen any one like him."

"No?" said Dormer Colville, encouragingly.

"He said he was an Englishman; but, of course, he is not. He is French, and has not the manner of a *bourgeois*

or a sailor. He has the manner of an aristocrat—one would say a Royalist—like Albert de Chantonnay, only a thousand times better."

"Yes," said Colville, glancing at Monsieur de Gemosac.

"More interesting, and so quick and amusing. He spoke of a heritage in France, and yet he said he was an Englishman. I hope he will secure his heritage."

"Yes," murmured Colville, still looking at Monsieur de Gemosac.

"And then, when we were in the boat," continued Juliette, still in confidence to them both, "he changed quite suddenly. He was short and sharp. He ordered us to do this and that; and one did it, somehow, without question. Even Marie obeyed him without hesitating, although she was half mad with fear. We were in danger. I knew that. Any one must have known it. And yet I was not afraid; I wonder why? And he—he laughed—that was all. *Mon Dieu!* he was brave. I never knew that any one could be so brave!"

She broke off suddenly, with her finger to her lips; for some one had opened the cabin door. Captain Clubbe came in, filling the whole cabin with his bulk, and on his heels followed Loo Barebone, his face and hair still wet and dripping.

"Mademoiselle was wondering," said Dormer Colville, who, it seemed, was quick to step into that silence which the object of a conversation is apt to cause—"Mademoiselle was wondering how it was that you escaped shipwreck in the storm."

"Ah! because one has a star. Even a poor sailor may have a star, mademoiselle. As well as the Prince Napoleon, who boasts that he has one of the first magnitude, I understand."

"You are not a poor sailor, monsieur," said Juliette.

"Then who am I?" he asked, with a gay laugh, spreading out his hands and standing before them, beneath the swinging lamp.

The Marquis de Gemosac raised himself on one elbow.

"I will tell you who you are," he said, in a low, quick voice, pointing one hand at Loo. "I will tell you." And his voice rose.

"You are the grandson of Louis XVI. and Marie Antoinette. You are the Last Hope of the French. That is your heritage. Juliette! this is the King of France!"

Juliette turned and looked at him, with all the colour gone from her face. Then, instinctively, she dropped on one knee, and before he had understood, or could stop her, had raised his hand to her lips.

CHAPTER XV

THE TURN OF THE TIDE

"TIDE's a-turning, sir," said a voice at the open doorway of the cabin, and Captain Clubbe turned his impassive face toward Dormer Colville, who looked oddly white beneath the light of the lamp.

Barebone had unceremoniously dragged his hand away from the hold of Juliette's fingers. He made a step back and then turned toward the door at the sound of his shipmate's well-known voice. He stood staring out into the darkness like one who is walking in his sleep. No one spoke, and through the open doorways no sound came to them but the song of the wind through the rigging.

At last Barebone turned, and there was no sign of fear or misgiving in his face. He looked at Clubbe, and at no one else, as if the Captain and he were alone in the cabin where they had passed so many years together in fair weather, to bring out that which is evil in a man, and foul, to evolve the good.

"What do *you* say?" he asked, in English, and he must have known that Captain Clubbe understood French better than he was ready to admit.

Clubbe passed his hand slowly across his cheek and chin, not in order to gain time, or because he had not an answer ready, but because he came of a slow-speaking race. His

answer had been made ready weeks before while he sat on the weather-beaten seat set against the wall of "The Black Sailor" at Farlingford.

"Tide's turned," he answered, simply. "You'd better get your oilskins on again and go."

"Yes," said Loo, with a queer laugh. "I fancy I shall want my oilskins."

The boat which had been sent from Royan, at the order of the pilot, who went ashore there, had followed "The Last Hope" up the river, and was now lying under the English ship's stern awaiting her two passengers and the turn of the tide.

Dormer Colville glanced at the cabin clock.

"Then," he said, briskly, "let us be going. It will be late enough as it is before we reach my cousin's house."

He turned and translated his remark for the benefit of the Marquis and Juliette, remembering that they must needs fail to understand a colloquy in the muttered and clipped English of the east coast. He was nervously anxious, it would appear, to tide over a difficult moment; to give Loo Barebone breathing space, and yet to avoid unnecessary question and answer. He had not lived forty adventurous years in the world without learning that it is the word too much which wrecks the majority of human schemes.

Their preparations had been made beforehand in readiness for the return of the tide, without the help of which the voyage back to Royan against a contrary wind must necessarily be long and wearisome.

There was nothing to wait for. Captain Clubbe was not the man to prolong a farewell or waste his words in wishes for the future, knowing how vain such must always be. Loo was dazed still by the crash of the storm and the tension of the effort to bring his boat safely through it.

The rest had not fully penetrated to his inmost mind yet. There had been only time to act, and none to think, and when the necessity to act was past, when he found himself crouching down under the weather gunwale of the French fishing-boat without even the necessity of laying hand on sheet or tiller, when, at last, he had time to think, he found that the ability to do so was no longer his. For Fortune, when she lifts up or casts down, usually numbs the understanding at the first turn of her wheel, sending her victim staggering on his way a mere machine, astonishingly alive to the necessity of the immediate moment, careful of the next step, but capable of looking neither forward nor backward with an understanding eye.

The waning moon came up at last, behind a distant line of trees on the Charente side, lighting up with a silver lining the towering clouds of the storm, which was still travelling eastward, leaving in its wake battered vines and ruined crops, searing the face of the land as with a hot iron. Loo lifted his head and looked round him. The owner of the boat was at the tiller, while his assistant sat amidships, his elbows on his knees, looking ahead with dreamy eyes. Close to Barebone, crouching from the wind which blew cold from the Atlantic, was Dormer Colville, affably silent. If Loo turned to glance at him he looked away, but when his back was turned Loo was conscious of watching eyes, full of sympathy, almost uncomfortably quick to perceive the inward working of another's mind, and suit his own thereto.

Thus the boat plunged out toward the sea and the flickering lights that mark the channel, tacking right across to that spit of land lying between the Gironde and the broad Atlantic, where grows a wine without match in all the world. Thus Loo Barebone turned his back on the ship which had been his home so long and set out into a new world; a new

and unknown life, with the Marquis de Gemosac's ringing words buzzing in his brain yet; with the warm touch of Juliette's lips burning still upon his hand.

"You are the grandson of Louis XVI. and Marie Antoinette! You are the Last Hope of France!"

And he remembered the lights and shadows on Juliette's hair as he looked down upon her bent head.

Colville was talking to the "patron" now. He knew the coast, it seemed, and, somewhere or other, had learnt enough of such matters of local seafaring interest as to set the fisherman at his ease and make him talk.

They were arranging where to land, and Colville was describing the exact whereabouts of a little jetty used for bathing purposes, which ran out from the sandy shore, quite near to Mrs. St. Pierre Lawrence's house, in the pine-trees, two miles south of Royan. It was no easy matter to find this spot by the dim light of a waning moon, and, half-mechanically, Loo joined in the search, and presently, when the jetty was reached, helped to make fast in a choppy sea.

They left the luggage on the jetty and walked across the silent sand side by side.

"There," said Colville, pointing forward. "It is through that opening in the pine-trees. A matter of five minutes and we shall be at my cousin's house."

"It is very kind of Mrs. St. Pierre Lawrence," answered Barebone, "to—well, to take me up. I suppose that is the best way to look at it."

Colville laughed quietly.

"Yes—put it thus, if you like," he said. They walked on in silence for a few yards, and then Dormer Colville slipped his hand within his companion's arm, as was the fashion among men even in England in those more expansive days.

"I think I know how you feel," he said, suiting his step to Barebone's. "You must feel like a man who is set down to a table to play a game of which he knows nothing, and on taking up his cards finds that he holds a hand all court-cards and trumps—and he doesn't know how to play them."

Barebone made no answer. He had yet to unlearn Captain Clubbe's unconscious teaching that a man's feelings are his own concern and no other has any interest or right to share in them, except one woman, and even she must guess the larger half.

"But as the game progresses," went on Colville, reassuringly, "you will find out how it is played. You will even find that you are a skilled player, and then the gambler's spirit will fire your blood and arouse your energies. You will discover what a damned good game it is. The great game—Barebone—the great game! And France is the country to play it in."

He stamped his foot on the soil of France as he spoke.

"The moment I saw you I knew that you would do. No man better fitted to play the game than yourself; for you have wit and quickness," went on this friend and mentor, with a little pressure on his companion's arm. "But—you will have to put your back into it, you know."

"What do you mean?"

"Well—I noticed at Farlingford a certain reluctance to begin. It is in the blood, I suppose. There is, you know, in the Bourbon blood a certain strain of—well, let us say of reluctance to begin. Others call it by a different name. One is not a Bourbon for nothing, I suppose. And everything—even if it be a vice—that serves to emphasise identity is to be cultivated. But, as I say, you will have to put your back into it later on. At present there will be less to do. You will have to play close and hold your hand, and follow

any lead that is given you by de Gemosac, or by my humble self. You will find that easy enough, I know. For you have all a Frenchman's quickness to understand. And I suppose—to put it plainly as between men of the world—now that you have had time to think it over—you are not afraid, Barebone ? "

"Oh no ! " laughed Barebone. "I am not afraid."

"One is not a Barebone—or a Bourbon—for nothing," observed Colville, in an aside to himself. "Gad ! I wish I could say that I should not be afraid myself under similar circumstances. My heart was in my mouth, I can tell you, in that cabin when de Gemosac blurted it all out. It came suddenly at the end, and—well !—it rather hit one in the wind. And, as I say, one is not a Bourbon for nothing. You come into a heritage, eight hundred years old, of likes and dislikes, of genius and incapacity, of an astounding cleverness, and a preposterous foolishness without compare in the history of dynasties. But that doesn't matter nowadays. This is a progressive age, you know ; even the Bourbons cannot hold back the advance of the times."

"I come into a heritage of friends and of enemies," said Barebone, gaily—"all ready made. That seems to me more important."

"Gad ! you are right," exclaimed Colville. "I said you would do the moment I saw you step ashore at Farlingford. You have gone right to the heart of the question at the first bound. It is your friends and your enemies that will give you trouble."

"More especially my friends," suggested Loo, with a light laugh.

"Right again," answered Colville, glancing at him sideways beneath the brim of his hat. And there was a little pause before he spoke again.

"You have probably learnt how to deal with your enemies at sea," he said thoughtfully at length. "Have you ever noticed how an English ship comes into a foreign harbour and takes her berth at her moorings? There is nothing more characteristic of the nation. And one captain is like another. No doubt you have seen Clubbe do it a hundred times. He comes in, all sail set, and steers straight for the berth he has chosen. And there are always half a dozen men in half a dozen small boats who go out to meet him. They stand up and wave their arms, and point this way and that. They ask a hundred questions, and with their hands round their faces, shout their advice. And in answer to one and the other the Captain looks over the side and says, 'You be damned.' That will be the way to deal with some of your friends and all your enemies alike, Barebone, if you mean to get on in France. You will have to look over the side at the people in small boats who are shouting and say, 'You be damned.'"

They were at the gate of a house now, set down in a clearing amid the pine-trees.

"This is my cousin's house," said Dormer Colville. "It is to be your home for the present. And you need not scruple, as she will tell you, to consider it so. It is not a time to think of obligations, you understand, or to consider that you are running into any one's debt. You may remember that afterward, perhaps, but that is as may be. For the present there is no question of obligations. We are all in the same boat—all playing the same game."

And he laughed below his breath as he closed the gate with caution; for it was late and the house seemed to hold none but sleepers.

"As for my cousin herself," he continued, as they went toward the door, "you will find her easy to get on with—a

clever woman, and a good-looking one. *Du reste*—it is not in that direction that your difficulties will lie. You will find it easy enough to get on with the women of the party, I fancy—from what I have observed."

And again he seemed to be amused

CHAPTER XVI

THE GAMBLERS

In a sense, politics must always represent the game that is most attractive to the careful gambler. For one may play at it without having anything to lose. It is one of the few games within the reach of the adventurous, where no stake need be cast upon the table. The gambler who takes up a political career plays to win or not to win. He may jump up from the gutter and shout that he is the man of the moment, without offering any proof of his assertion beyond the loudness of a strident voice. And if no one listens to him he loses nothing but his breath.

And in France the man who shouts loudest is almost certain to have the largest following. In England the same does not yet hold good, but the day seems to be approaching when it will.

In France, ever since the great Revolution, men have leapt up from the gutter to grasp the reins of power. Some, indeed, have sprung from the gutter of a palace, which is no more wholesome, it would appear, than the drain of any street, or a ditch that carries off the refuse of a cheap Press.

There are certain rooms in the north wing of the Louvre, in Paris, rooms having windows facing across the Rue de Rivoli toward the Palais Royal, where men must have sat in the comfortable leather-covered chair of the High Official

and laughed at the astounding simplicity of the French people. But he laughs best who laughs last, and the People will assuredly be amused in a few months, or a few years, at the very sudden and very humiliating discomfiture of a gentleman falling face-foremost into the street or hanging forlornly from a lamp-post at the corner of it. For some have quitted these comfortable chairs, in these quiet double-windowed rooms overlooking the Rue de Rivoli, for no better fate.

It was in the August of 1850 that a stout gentleman, seated in one of these comfortable chairs, succumbed so far to the warmth of the palace corridors as to fall asleep. He was not in the room of a high official, but in the waiting-room attached to it.

He knew, moreover, that the High Official himself was scarcely likely to dismiss a previous visitor or a present occupation any the earlier for being importuned; for he was aware of the official's antecedents, and knew that a Jack-in-office, who has shouted himself into office, is nearly always careful to be deaf to other voices than his own.

Moreover, Mr. John Turner was never pressed for time.

"Yes," he had been known to say, "I was in Paris in '48. Never missed a meal."

Whereas others, with much less at stake than this great banker, had omitted not only meals, but their night's rest—night after night—in those stirring times.

John Turner was still asleep when the door leading to the Minister's room was cautiously opened, showing an inner darkness such as prevails in an alcove between double doors. The door opened a little wider. No doubt the peeping eye had made sure that the occupant of the waiting-room was asleep. On the threshold stood a man of middle height, who carried himself with a certain grace and quiet

dignity. He was pale almost to sallowness, a broad face with a kind mouth and melancholy eyes, without any light in them. The melancholy must have been expressed rather by the lines of the brows than by the eye itself, for this was without life or expression—the eye of a man who is either very short-sighted or is engaged in looking through that which he actually sees, to something he fancies he perceives beyond it.

His lips smiled, but the smile died beneath a neatly waxed moustache and reached no higher on the mask-like face. Then he disappeared in the outer darkness between the two doors, and the handle made no noise in turning.

In a few minutes an attendant, in a gay uniform, came in by the same door, without seeking to suppress the clatter of his boots on the oak floor.

"Holà! monsieur," he said, in a loud voice. And Mr. John Turner crossed his legs and leant farther back in the chair, preparatory to opening his eyes, which he did directly on the new-comer's face, without any of that vague flitting hither and thither of glance which usually denotes the sleeper surprised.

The eyes were of a clear blue, and Mr. Turner looked five years younger with them open than with them shut. But he was immensely stout.

"Well, my friend," he said, soothingly; for the Minister's attendant had a truculent ministerial manner. "Why so much noise?"

"The Minister will see you."

John Turner yawned and reached for his hat.

"The Minister is pressed for time."

"So was I," replied the Englishman, who spoke perfect French, "when I first sat down here, half an hour ago. But even haste will pass in time."

He rose, and followed the servant into the inner room, where he returned the bow of a little white-bearded gentleman seated at a huge desk.

"Well, sir," said this gentleman, with the abrupt manner which has come to be considered Napoleonic on the stage or in the political world to-day. "Your business?"

The servant had withdrawn, closing the door behind him with an emphasis of the self-accusatory sort.

"I am a banker," replied John Turner, looking with an obese deliberation toward one of the deep windows, where, half-concealed by the heavy curtain, a third person stood gazing down into the street.

The Minister smiled involuntarily, forgetting his dignity of a two-years' growth.

"Oh, you may speak before Monsieur," he said.

"But I am behind him," was the immediate reply.

The gentleman leaning against the window-breast did not accept this somewhat obvious invitation to show his face. He must have heard it, however, despite an absorption which was probably chronic; for he made a movement to follow with his glance the passage of some object of interest in the street below. And the movement seemed to supply John Turner with the information he desired.

"Yes, I am a banker," he said, more genially.

The Minister gave a short laugh.

"Monsieur," he said, "every one in Europe knows that. Proceed."

"And I only meddle in politics when I see the possibility of making an honest penny."

"Already made—that honest penny—if one may believe the gossip—of Europe," said the Minister. "So many pence that it is whispered that you do not know what to do with them."

"It is unfortunate," admitted Turner, "that one can only dine once a day."

The little gentleman in office had more than once invited his visitor to be seated, indicating by a gesture the chair placed ready for him. After a slow inspection of its legs, Mr. John Turner now seated himself. It would seem that he, at the same time, tacitly accepted the invitation to ignore the presence of a third person.

"Since you seem to know all about me," he said, "I will not waste any more of your time, or mine, by trying to make you believe that I am eminently respectable. The business that brought me here, however, is of a political nature. A plain man, like myself, only touches politics when he sees his gain clearly. There are others who enter that field from purer motives, I am told. I have not met them."

The Minister smiled on one side of his face, and all of it went white. He glanced uncomfortably at that third person, whom he had suggested ignoring.

"And yet," went on John Turner, very dense or greatly daring, "I have lived many years in France, Monsieur le Ministre."

The Minister frowned at him, and made a quick gesture of one hand toward the window.

"So long," pursued the Englishman, placidly, "as the trains start punctually, and there is not actually grape-shot in the streets, and one may count upon one's dinner at the hour, one form of government in this country seems to me to be as good as another, Monsieur le Ministre. A Bourbon Monarchy or an Orleans Monarchy, or a Republic, or—well, an Empire, Monsieur le Ministre."

"*Mon Dieu!* have you come here to tell me this?" cried the Minister, impatiently, glancing over his shoulder toward

the window, and with one hand already stretched out toward the little bell standing on his desk.

"Yes," answered Turner, leaning forward to draw the bell out of reach. He nodded his head with a friendly smile, and his fat cheeks shook. "Yes, and other things as well. Some of those other matters are perhaps even more worthy of your earnest attention. It is worth your while to listen. More especially, as you are paid for it—by the hour."

He laughed inside himself, with a hollow sound, and placidly crossed his legs.

"Yes; I came to tell you, firstly, that the present form of government, and, er—any other form which may evolve from it——"

"Oh!—proceed, monsieur!" exclaimed the Minister, hastily, while the man in the recess of the window turned and looked over his shoulder at John Turner's profile with a smile, not unkind, on his sphinx-like face.

"—has the inestimable advantage of my passive approval. That is why I am here, in fact. I should be sorry to see it upset."

He broke off, and turned laboriously in his chair to look toward the window, as if the gaze of the expressionless eyes there had tickled the back of his neck like a fly. But by the time the heavy banker had got round, the curtain had fallen again in its original folds.

"—by a serious Royalist plot," concluded Turner, in his thick, deliberate way.

"So, assuredly, would any patriot or any true friend of France," said the Minister, in his best declamatory manner.

"Um—m. That is out of my depth," returned the Englishman, bluntly. "I paddle about in the shallow water at the edge and pick up what I can, you understand. I am

too fat for a *voyant* bathing-costume, and the deep waters beyond, Monsieur le Ministre."

The Minister drummed impatiently on his desk with his five fingers, and looked at Turner sideways beneath his brows.

"Royalist plots are common enough," he said, tentatively, after a pause.

"Not a Royalist plot with money in it," was the retort. "I dare say an honest politician, like yourself, is aware that in France it is always safe to ignore the conspirator who has no money, and always dangerous to treat with contempt him who jingles a purse. There is only a certain amount of money in the world, Monsieur le Ministre, and we bankers usually know where it is. I do not mean the money that the world pours into its own stomach. That is always afloat —changing hands daily. I mean the Great Reserves. We watch those, you understand. And if one of the Great Reserves, or even one of the smaller reserves, moves, we wonder why it is being moved and we nearly always find out."

"One supposes," said the Minister, hazarding an opinion for the first time, and he gave it with a sidelong glance toward the window, "that it is passing from the hands of a financier possessing money into those of one who has none."

"Precisely. And if a financier possessing money is persuaded to part with it in such a quarter as you suggest, one may conclude that he has good reason to anticipate a substantial return for the loan. You, who are a brilliant collaborateur in the present government, should know that, if any one does, Monsieur le Ministre."

The Minister glanced toward the window, and then gave a good-natured and encouraging laugh, quite unexpectedly, just as if he had been told to do so by the silent man looking

down into the street, who may, indeed, have had time to make a gesture.

"And," pursued the banker, "if a financier possessing money parts with it—or, to state the case more particularly, if a financier possessing no money, to my certain knowledge, suddenly raises it from nowhere definite, for the purposes of a Royalist conspiracy, the natural conclusion is that the Royalists have got hold of something good."

John Turner leant back in his chair and suppressed a yawn.

"This room is very warm," he said, producing a pocket-handkerchief. Which was tantamount to a refusal to say more.

The Minister twisted the end of his moustache in reflection. It was at this time the fashion in France to wear the moustache waxed. Indeed, men displayed thus their political bias to all whom it might concern.

"There remains nothing," said the official at length, with a gracious smile, "but to ask your terms."

For he who was afterward Napoleon the Third had introduced into French political and social life a plain-spoken cynicism which characterises both to this day.

"Easy," replied Turner. "You will find them easy. Firstly, I would ask that your stupid secret police keeps its fingers out; secondly, that leniency be assured to one person, a client of mine—the woman who supplies the money—who is under the influence—well, that influence which makes women do nobler and more foolish things, monsieur, than men are capable of."

He rose as he spoke, collected his hat and stick, and walked slowly to the door. With his hand on the handle, he paused.

"You can think about it," he said, "and let me know

at your leisure. By the way, there is one more point, Monsieur le Ministre. I would ask you to let this matter remain a secret, known only to our two selves and—the Prince President."

And John Turner went out, without so much as a glance toward the window.

CHAPTER XVII

ON THE PONT ROYAL

It would appear that John Turner had business south of the Seine, though his clients were few in the Faubourg St. Germain. For this placid British banker was known to be a good hater. His father before him, it was said, had had dealings with the Bourbons, while many a great family of the Emigration would have lost more than the esteem of their fellows in their panic-stricken flight, had it not been that one cool-headed and calm man of business stayed at his post through the topsy-turvy days of the Terror, and did his duty by the clients whom he despised.

On quitting the Louvre, by the door facing the Palais Royal, Turner moved to the left. To say that he walked would be to overstate the action of his little stout legs, which took so short a stride that his progress suggested wheels and some one pushing behind. He turned to the left again, and ambled under the great arch, to take the path passing behind the Tuileries.

His stoutness was, in a sense, a safeguard in streets where the travelling Englishman, easily recognised, has not always found a welcome. His clothes and his walk were studiously French. Indeed, no one, passing by with a casual glance, would have turned to look a second time at a figure so typical of the Paris streets.

Mr. Turner quitted the enclosure of the Tuileries gardens

and crossed the quay toward the Pont Royal. But he stopped short under the trees by the river wall, with a low whistle of surprise. Crossing the bridge, toward him, and carrying a carpet-bag of early Victorian design, was Mr. Septimus Marvin, rector of Farlingford, in Suffolk.

After a moment's thought, John Turner went toward the bridge, and stationed himself on the pavement at the corner. The pavement is narrow, and Turner was wide. In order to pass him, Septimus Marvin would need to step into the road. This he did, without resentment; with, indeed, a courtly and vague inclination of the head toward the human obstruction.

"Look here, Sep," said Turner, "you are not going to pass an old schoolfellow like that."

Septimus Marvin lurched onward one or two steps, with long loose strides. Then he clutched his carpet-bag with both hands and looked back at his interlocutor, with the scared eyes of a detected criminal. This gave place to the habitual gentle smile when, at last, the recognition was complete.

"What have you got there?" asked Turner, pointing with his stick at the carpet-bag. "A kitten?"

"No—no," replied Marvin, looking this way and that, to make sure that none could overhear.

"A Nanteuil—engraved from his own drawing, Jack—a real Nanteuil. I have just been to a man I know—the print-shop opposite the statue on the Quai Voltaire—to have my own opinion verified. I was sure of it. He says that I am undoubtedly right. It is a genuine Nanteuil—a proof before letters."

"Ah! And you have just picked it up cheap? Picked it up, eh?"

"No, no, quite the contrary," Marvin replied, in a confidential whisper.

"Stolen—dear, dear! I am sorry to hear that, Septimus."

And Septimus Marvin broke into the jerky, spasmodic laugh of one who has not laughed for long—perhaps for years."

"Ah, Jack," he said; "you are still up to a joke."

"Well, I should hope so. We are quite close to my club. Come, and have luncheon, and tell me all about it."

So the Social and Sporting Club, renowned at that day for its matchless cuisine and for nothing else of good repute at all, entertained an angel unawares, and was much amused at Septimus Marvin's appearance, although the amusement was not apparent. The members, it would appear, were gentlemen of that good school of old France which, like many good things both French and English, is fast disappearing. And with all those faults, which we are so ready to perceive in any Frenchman, there is none on earth who will conceal from you so effectually the fact that in his heart he is vastly amused.

It was with some difficulty that Septimus was persuaded to consign his carpet-bag to the custody of the hall-porter.

"If it wasn't a Nanteuil," he explained in a whisper to his friend, "I should have no hesitation; for I am sure the man is honest and in every way to be relied upon. But a Nanteuil—*ad vivum*—Jack. There are none like him. It is priceless."

"You used not to be a miser," said Turner, panting on the stairs, when at last the bag was concealed in a safe place. "What matter what the value may be, so long as you like it?"

"Oh! but the value is of great importance," answered Septimus, rather sheepishly.

"Then you have changed a good deal since you and I

were at Ipswich school together. There, sit down at this table. I suppose you are hungry. I hope you are. Try and think—there's a good fellow—and remember that they have the best cook in Paris here. Their morals ain't of the first water, but their cook is without match. Yes, you have changed a good deal, if you think of money."

Septimus Marvin had changed colour, at all events, in the last few minutes.

"I have to, Jack, I have to. That is the truth of it. I have come to Paris to sell that Nanteuil. To realise, I suppose you would call it in the financial world. *Pro aris et focis*, old friend. I want money for the altar and the hearth. It has come to that. I cannot ask them in Farlingford for more money, for I know they have none. And the church is falling about our ears. The house wants painting. It is going the way of the church, indeed."

"Ah!" said Turner, glancing at him over the bill of fare. "So you have to sell an engraving. It goes to the heart, I suppose?"

Marvin laughed and rubbed his spare hands together, with an assumption of cheerfulness in which some one less stout and well-to-do than his companion might have perceived that dim minor note of pathos, which always rings somewhere in a forced laugh.

"One has to face it," he replied. "*Ne cedas malis*, you know. I suddenly found it was necessary. It was forced upon me, in fact. I found that my niece was secretly helping to make both ends meet. A generous action, made doubly generous by the manner in which it was performed."

"Miriam?" put in John Turner, who appeared to be absorbed in the all-important document before him.

"Yes, Miriam. Do you know her? Ah! I forgot. You are her guardian and trustee. I sometimes think my

memory is failing. I found her out quite by accident. It must have been going on for quite a long time. Heaven will reward her, Turner! One cannot doubt it."

He absent-mindedly seized two pieces of bread from the basket offered to him by a waiter, and began to eat as if famished.

"Steady, man, steady," exclaimed Turner, leaning forward with a horror-stricken face to restrain him. "Don't spoil a grand appetite on bread. Gad! I wish I could fall on my food like that. You seem to be starving."

"I think I forgot to have any breakfast," said Marvin, apologetically.

"I dare say you did!" was the angry retort. "You always were a bit of an ass, you know, Sep. But I have ordered a tiptop luncheon, and I'll trouble you not to wolf like that."

"Well—well, I'm sorry," said the other, who, even in the far-off days at Ipswich school, had always been in the clouds, while John Turner moved essentially on the earth.

"And do not sell that Nanteuil to the first bidder," went on Turner, with a glance, of which the keenness was entirely disarmed by the good-natured roundness of his huge cheeks. "I know a man who will buy it—at a good price, too. Where did you get it?"

"Ah! that is a long story," replied Marvin, looking dreamily out of the window. "I bought it, years ago, at Farlingford. But it is a long story."

"Then tell it, slowly. While I eat this *sole à la Normande*. I see you've nearly finished yours, and I have scarcely begun."

It was a vague and disjointed enough story, as related by Septimus Marvin. And it was the story of Loo Barebone's father. As it progressed John Turner grew redder

and redder in the face, while he drank glass after glass of Burgundy.

"A queer story," he ejaculated, breathlessly. "Go on. And you bought this engraving from the man himself, before he died? Did he tell you where he got it? It is the portrait of a woman, you say."

"Portrait of a woman—yes, yes. But he did not know who she was. And I do not know whether I gave him enough for it. Do you think I did, Jack?"

"I do not know how much you gave him, but I have no doubt that it was too much. Where did he get it?"

"He thinks it was brought from France by his mother, or the woman who was supposed in Farlingford to be his mother—together with other papers, which he burnt, I believe."

"And then he died?"

"Yes—yes. He died—but he left a son."

"The devil he did! Why did you not mention that before? Where is the son? Tell me all about him, while I see how they've served this *langue fourrée*, which should be eaten slowly; though it is too late to remind you of that now. Go on. Tell me all about the son."

And before the story of Loo Barebone was half told, John Turner laid aside his knife and fork and turned his attention to the dissection of this ill-told tale. As the story neared its end, he glanced round the room, to make sure that none was listening to their conversation.

"Dormer Colville," he repeated. "Does he come into it?"

"He came to Farlingford with the Marquis de Gemosac, out of pure good-nature—because the Marquis could speak but little English. He is a charming man. So unselfish and disinterested."

"Who? The Marquis?"

"No; Dormer Colville."

"Oh yes!" said John Turner, returning to the cold tongue. "Yes; a charming fellow."

And he glanced again at his friend, with a queer smile. When luncheon was finished, Turner led the way to a small smoking-room, where they would be alone, and sent a messenger to fetch Septimus Marvin's bag from downstairs.

"We will have a look at your precious engraving," he said, "while we smoke a cigar. It is, I suppose, a relic of the Great Monarchy, and I may tell you that there is rather a small demand just now for relics of that period. It would be wiser not to take it into the open market. I think my client would give you as good a price as any; and I suppose you want to get as much as you can for it now that you have made up your mind to the sacrifice?"

Marvin suppressed a sigh, and rubbed his hands together with that forced jocularity which had made his companion turn grave once before.

"Oh, I mean to drive a hard bargain, I can tell you!" was the reply, with an assumption of worldly wisdom on a countenance little calculated to wear that expression naturally.

"What did your friend in the print-shop on the Quai Voltaire mention as a probable price?" asked Turner, carelessly.

"Well, he said he might be able to sell it for me at four thousand francs. I would not hear of his running any risk in the matter, however. Such a good fellow, he is. So honest."

"Yes, he is likely to be that," said Turner, with his broad smile. He was a little sleepy after a heavy luncheon, and sipped his coffee with a feeling of charity toward his

fellow-men. "You would find lots of honest men in the Quai Voltaire, Sep. I will tell you what I will do. Give me the print, and I will do my best for you. Would ten thousand francs help you out of your difficulties?"

"I do not remember saying that I was in difficulties," objected the Reverend Septimus, with heightened colour.

"Don't you? Memory *is* bad, is it not? Would ten thousand francs paint the rectory, then?"

"It would ease my mind and sweeten my sleep at night to have half that sum, my friend. With two hundred pounds I could face the world *æquo animo*."

"I will see what I can do. This is the print, is it? I don't know much about such things myself, but I should put the price down at ten thousand francs."

"But the man in the Quai Voltaire?"

"Precisely. I know little about prints, but a lot about the Quai Voltaire. Who is the lady? I presume it is a portrait?"

"It is a portrait, but I cannot identify the original. To an expert of that period it should not be impossible, however." Septimus Marvin was all awake now, with flushed cheeks and eyes brightened by enthusiasm. "Do you know why? Because her hair is dressed in a peculiar way—*poufs de sentiment*, these curls are called. They were only worn for a brief period. In those days the writings of Jean Jacques Rousseau had a certain vogue among the idle classes. The women showed their sentiments in the dressing of their hair. Very curious—very curious. And here, in the hair, half-concealed, is an imitation dove's nest."

"The deuce there is!" ejaculated Turner, pulling at his cigar.

"A fashion which ruled for a still briefer period."

"I should hope so. Well, roll the thing up, and I will

do my best for you. I'm less likely to be taken in than you are, perhaps. If I sell it, I will send you a cheque this evening. It is a beautiful face."

"Yes," agreed Septimus Marvin, with a sharp sigh. "It is a beautiful face."

And he slowly rolled up his most treasured possession, which John Turner tucked under his arm. On the Pont Royal they parted company.

"By the way," said John Turner, after they had shaken hands, "You never told me what sort of a man this young fellow is—this Loo Barebone?"

"The dearest fellow in the world," answered Marvin, with eyes aglow behind his spectacles. "To me he has been as a son—an elder brother, as it were, to little Sep. I was already an elderly man, you know, when Sep was born. Too old, perhaps. Who knows? Heaven's way is not always marked very clearly."

He nodded vaguely and went away a few paces. Then he remembered something and came back.

"I don't know if I ought to speak of such a thing. But I quite hoped, at one time, that Miriam might one day recognise his goodness of heart."

"What?" interrupted Turner. "The mate of a coasting schooner!"

"He is more than that, my friend," answered Septimus Marvin, nodding his head slowly, so that the sun flashed on his spectacles in such a manner as to make Turner blink. Then he turned away again and crossed the bridge, leaving the English banker at the corner of it, still blinking.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE CITY THAT SOON FORGETS

THERE are in humble life some families which settle their domestic differences on the doorstep, while the neighbours, gathered hastily by the commotion, tiptoe behind each other to watch the fun. In the European congerie France represents this loud-voiced household, and Paris—Paris, the city that soon forgets—is the doorstep whereon they wrangle.

The bones of contention may be pitched far and wide by the chances and changes of exile, but the contending dogs bark and yap in Paris. At this time there lived, sometimes in Italy, sometimes at Frohsdorf, a jovial young gentleman, fond of sport and society, cultivating the tastes and enjoying the easy existence of a country-gentleman of princely rank—the Comte de Chambord. Son of that Duchesse de Berri who tried to play a great part and failed, he was married to an Italian princess and had no children. He was, therefore, the last of the Bourbons, and passed in Europe as such. But he did not care. Perhaps his was the philosophy of the indolent which saith that some one must be last and why not I?

Nevertheless, there ran in his veins some energetic blood. On his father's side he was descended from sixty-six kings of France. From his mother he inherited a relationship to many makers of history. For the Duchesse de Berri's grandmother was the sister of Marie Antoinette. Her mother was

aunt to that Empress of the French, Marie Louise, who was a notable exception to the rule that "Bon sang ne peut mentir." Her father was a king of Sicily and Naples. She was a Bourbon married to a Bourbon. When she was nineteen she gave birth to a daughter, who died next day. In a year she had a son who died in twenty hours. Two years later her husband died in her arms, assassinated, in a back room of the Opera House in Paris.

Seven months after her husband's death she gave birth to the Comte de Chambord, the last of the old Bourbons. She was active, energetic and of boundless courage. She made a famous journey through La Vendée on horseback to rally the Royalists. She urged her father-in-law, Charles X., to resist the revolution. She was the best Royalist of them all. And her son was the Comte de Chambord, who could have been a king if he had not been a philosopher, or a coward.

He was waiting till France called him with one voice. As if France had ever called for anything with one voice!

Amid the babel there rang out not a few voices for the younger branch of the Royal line—the Orleans. Louis Philippe—king for eighteen years—was still alive, living in exile at Claremont. Two years earlier, in the rush of the revolution of 1848, he had effected his escape to Newhaven. The Orleans always seek a refuge in England, and always turn and abuse that country when they can go elsewhere in safety. And England is not one penny the worse for their abuse, and no man or country was ever yet one penny the better for their friendship.

Louis Philippe had been called to the throne by the people of France. His reign of eighteen years was marked by one great deed. He threw open the Palace of Versailles —which was not his—to the public. And then the people who called him in, hooted him out. His life had been

attempted many times. All the other kings hated him and refused to let their daughters marry his sons. He and his sons were waiting at Claremont while the talkers in Paris talked their loudest.

There was a third bone of contention—the Imperial line. At this time the champions of this morsel were at the summit; for a Bonaparte was riding on the top of the revolutionary scrimmage.

By the death of the great Napoleon's only child, the second son of his third brother became the recognised claimant to the Imperial crown.

For France has long ceased to look to the eldest son as the rightful heir. There is, in fact, a curse on the first-born of France. Napoleon's son, the King of Rome, died in exile, an Austrian. The Duc de Bordeaux, born eight years after him, never wore the crown, and died in exile, childless. The Comte de Paris, born also at the Tuileries, was exiled when he was ten years old, and died in England. All these, of one generation. And of the next, the Prince Imperial, hurried out of France in 1870, perished on the Veldt. The King of Rome lies in his tomb at Vienna, the Duc de Bordeaux at Göritz, the Comte de Paris at Weybridge, the Prince Imperial at Farnborough. These are the heirs of France, born in the palace of the Tuileries. How are they cast upon the waters of the world! And where the palace of the Tuileries once stood the pigeons now call to each other beneath the trees, while, near at hand, lolls on the public seat he whom France has always with her, the *vaurien*—the worth-nothing.

So passes the glory of the world. It is not a good thing to be born in a palace, nor to live in one.

It was in the Rue Lafayette that John Turner had his office, and when he emerged from it into that long street on

the evening of the 25th of August, 1850, he ran against, or he was rather run against by, the newsboy who shrieked as he pattered along in lamentable boots and waved a sheet in the face of the passer : " The King is dead ! The King is dead ! "

And Paris—the city that soon forgets—smiled and asked what King ?

Louis Philippe was dead in England, at the age of seventy-seven, the bad son of a bad father, another of those adventurers whose happy hunting-ground always has been, always will be, France.

John Turner, like many who are slow in movement, was quick in thought. He perceived at once that the death of Louis Philippe left the field open to the next adventurer ; for he left behind him no son of his own mettle.

Turner went back to his office, where the pen with which he had signed a cheque for four hundred pounds, payable to the Reverend Septimus Marvin, was still wet ; where, at the bottom of the largest safe, the portrait of an unknown lady of the period of Louis XVI. lay concealed. He wrote out a telegram to Mrs. St. Pierre Lawrence, addressed to her at her villa near Royan, and then proceeded to his dinner with the grave face of the careful critic.

The next morning he received the answer, at his breakfast-table, in the apartment he had long occupied in the Avenue d'Antin. But he did not open the envelope. He had telegraphed to Mrs. St. Pierre Lawrence, asking if it would be convenient for her to put him up for a few days. And he suspected that it would not.

" When I am gone," he said to his well-trained servant, " put that into an envelope and send it after me to the Villa Cordouan, Royan. Pack my portmanteau for a week."

Thus John Turner set out southward to join a party of those Royalists whom his father before him had learnt to

despise. And in a manner he was pre-armed ; for he knew that he would not be welcome. It was in those days a long journey, for the railway was laid no farther than Tours, from whence the traveller must needs post to La Rochelle, and there take a boat to Royan—that shallow harbour at the mouth of the Gironde.

"Must have a change—of cooking," he explained to Mrs. St. Pierre Lawrence. "Doctor says I am getting too stout."

He shook her deliberately by the hand without appearing to notice her blank looks.

"So I came south and shall finish up at Biarritz, which they say is going to be fashionable. I hope it is not inconvenient for you to give me a bed—a solid one—for a night or two."

"Oh no!" answered Mrs. St. Pierre Lawrence, who had charming manners, and was one of those fortunate persons who are never at a loss. "Did you not receive my telegram?"

"Telling me you were counting the hours till my arrival?"

"Well," admitted Mrs. St. Pierre Lawrence, wisely reflecting that he would ultimately see the telegram, "hardly so fervent as that——"

"Good Lord!" interrupted Turner, looking behind her toward the veranda, which was cool and shady, where two men were seated near a table bearing coffee-cups. "Who is that?"

"Which?" asked Mrs. St. Pierre Lawrence, without turning to follow the direction of his glance.

"Oh! one is Dormer Colville, I see that. But the other—gad!"

"Why do you say gad?" asked the lady, with surprise.

"Where did he get that face from?" was the reply.

Turner took off his hat and mopped his brow; for it was very hot and the August sun was setting over a copper sea.

"Where we all get our faces from, I suppose!" answered Mrs. St. Pierre Lawrence, with her easy laugh. She was always mistress of the situation. "The heavenly warehouse, one supposes. His name is Barebone. He is a friend of Dormer's."

"Any friend of Dormer Colville's commands my interest."

Mrs. St. Pierre Lawrence glanced quickly at her companion beneath the shade of her lace-trimmed parasol.

"What do you mean by that?" she asked, in a voice suddenly hard and resentful.

"That he chooses his friends well," returned the banker, with his guileless smile. His face was bovine, and in the heat of summer apt to be shiny. No one would attribute an inner meaning to a stout person thus outwardly brilliant. Mrs. St. Pierre Lawrence appeared to be mollified, and turned toward the house with a gesture inviting him to walk with her.

"I will be frank with you," she said. "I telegraphed to tell you that the Villa Cordouan is for the moment unfortunately filled with guests."

"What matter? I will go to the hotel. In fact, I told the driver of my carriage to wait for further orders. I half feared that at this time of year, you know, house would be full. I'll just shake hands with Colville and then be off. You will let me come in after dinner, perhaps. You and I must have a talk about money, you will remember."

There was no time to answer; for Dormer Colville, perceiving their approach, was already hurrying down the steps of the veranda to meet them. He laughed as he came,

for John Turner's bulk made him a laughing matter in the eyes of most men, and his good humour seemed to invite them to frank amusement.

The greeting was, therefore, jovial enough on both sides, and after being introduced to Loo Barebone, Mr. Turner took his leave without farther defining his intentions for the evening.

"I do not think it matters much," Mrs. St. Pierre Lawrence said to her two guests, when he had left. "And he may not come, after all."

Her self-confidence sufficiently convinced Loo, who was always ready to leave something to chance. But Colville shook his head.

It thus came about that sundry persons of title and importance who had been invited to come to the Villa Cordouan after dinner for a little music found the English banker complacently installed in the largest chair, with a shirt-front evading the constraint of an abnormal waistcoat, and a sleepy chin drooping surreptitiously toward it.

"He is my banker from Paris," whispered Mrs. St. Pierre Lawrence to one and another. "He knows nothing, and so far as I am aware, is no politician—merely a banker, you understand. Leave him alone and he will go to sleep."

During the three weeks which Loo Barebone had spent very pleasantly at the Villa Cordouan, Mrs. St. Pierre Lawrence had provided music and light refreshment for her friends on several occasions. And each evening the drawing-room, which was not a small one, had been filled to overflowing. Friends brought their friends and introduced them to the hostess, who in turn presented them to Barebone. Some came from a distance, driving from Saintes or La Rochelle or Pons. Others had taken houses for the bathing-season at Royan itself.

"He never makes a mistake," said the hostess to Dormer Colville, behind her fan, a hundred times, following with her shrewd eyes the gay and easy movements of Loo, who seemed to be taught by some instinct to suit his manner to his interlocutor.

To-night there was more music and less conversation.

"Play him to sleep," Dormer Colville had said to his cousin. And at length Turner succumbed to the soft effect of a sonata. He even snored in the shade of a palm, and the gaiety of the proceedings in no way suffered.

It was only Colville who seemed uneasy and always urged any who were talking earnestly to keep out of earshot of the sleeping Englishman. Once or twice he took Barebone by the arm and led him to the other end of the room, for he was always the centre of the liveliest group and led the laughter there.

"Oh! but he is charming, my dear," more than one guest whispered to Mrs. St. Pierre Lawrence, as they took their departure.

"He will do—he will do," the men said with a new light of hope in their grave faces.

Nearly all had gone when John Turner at length woke up. Indeed, Colville threw a book upon the floor to disturb his placid sleep.

"I will come round to-morrow," he said, bidding his hostess good night. "I have some papers for you to sign since you are determined to sell your *rentes* and leave the money idle at your bank."

"Yes. I am quite determined," she answered, gaily, for she was before her time inasmuch as she was what is known in these days of degenerate speech as cock-sure.

And when John Turner, carrying a bundle of papers, presented himself at the Villa Cordouan next morning he

found Mrs. St. Pierre Lawrence sitting alone in the veranda.

"Dormer and his friend have left me to my own devices. They have gone away," she mentioned, casually, in the course of conversation.

"Suddenly?"

"Oh no," she answered, carelessly, and wrote her name in a clear firm hand on the document before her. And John Turner looked dense.

CHAPTER XIX

IN THE BREACH

The Marquis de Gemosac was sitting at the open window of the little drawing-room in the only habitable part of the château. From his position he looked across the courtyard toward the garden where stiff cypress-trees stood sentry among the mignonette and the roses, now in the full glory of their autumn bloom.

Beyond the garden, the rough outline of the walls cut a straight line across the distant plains, which melted away into the haze of the marsh-lands by the banks of the Gironde far to the westward.

The Marquis had dined. They dined early in those days in France, and coffee was still served after the evening meal.

The sun was declining toward the sea in a clear copper-coloured sky, but a fresh breeze was blowing in from the estuary to temper the heat of the later rays.

The Marquis was beating time with one finger, and within the room, to an impromptu accompaniment invented by Juliette, Barebone was singing :

C'est le Hasard,
Qui, tôt ou tard,
Ici-bas nous seconde ;
Car,
D'un bout du monde
A l'autre bout,
Le Hasard seul fait tout.

He broke off with a laugh in which Juliette's low voice joined.

"That is splendid, mademoiselle," he cried, and the Marquis clapped his thin hands together.

Un tel qu'on vantait
Par hasard était
D'origine assez mince;
Par hasard il plut,
Par hasard il fut
Baron, ministre et prince:
C'est le Hasard,
Qui, tôt ou tard,
Ici bas nous seconde;
Car,
D'un bout du monde
A l'autre bout,
Le Hasard seul fait tout.

"There—that is all I know. It is the only song I sing."

"But there are other verses," said Juliette, resting her hands on the keys of the wheezy spinet which must have been a hundred years old. "What are they about?"

"I do not know, mademoiselle," he answered, looking down at her. "I think it is a love-song."

She had pinned some mignonette, strong scented as autumn mignonette is, in the front of her muslin dress, and the heavy heads had dragged the stems to one side. She put the flowers in order, slowly, and then bent her head to enjoy the scent of them.

"It scarcely sounds like one," she said, in a low and inquiring voice. The Marquis was a little deaf. "Is it all chance then?"

"Oh yes," he answered, and as he spoke without lowering his voice she played softly on the old piano the simple

melody of his song. "It is all chance, mademoiselle. Did they not teach you that at the school at Saintes?"

But she was not in a humour to join in his ready laughter. The room was rosy with the glow of the setting sun, she breathed the scent of the mignonette at every breath, the air which she had picked out on the spinet in unison with his clear and sympathetic voice had those minor tones and slow slurring from note to note which are characteristic of the gay and tearful songs of southern France and all Spain. None of which things are conducive to gaiety when one is young.

She glanced at him with one quick turn of the head and made no answer. But she played the air over again—the girls sing it to this day over their household work at Farlingford to other words—with her foot on the soft pedal. The Marquis hummed it between his teeth at the other end of the room.

"This room is hot," she exclaimed, suddenly, and rose from her seat without troubling to finish the melody.

"And that window will not open, mademoiselle; for I have tried it," added Barebone, watching her impatient movements.

"Then I am going into the garden," she said, with a sharp sigh and a wilful toss of the head.

It was not his fault that the setting sun, against which, as many have discovered, men shut their doors, should happen to be burning hot or that the window would not open. But Juliette seemed to blame him for it or for something else, perhaps. One never knows.

Barebone did not follow her at once, but stood by the window talking to the Marquis, who was in a reminiscent humour. The old man interrupted his own narrative, however.

"There," he cried, "is Juliette on that wall overhanging the river. It is where the English effected a breach long ago, my friend—you need not smile, for you are no Englishman—and the château has only been taken twice through all the centuries of fighting. There! She ventures still farther. I have told her a hundred times that the wall is unsafe."

"Shall I go and warn her the hundred-and-first time?" asked Loo, willing enough.

"Yes, my friend, do. And speak to her severely. She is only a child, remember."

"Yes—I will remember that."

Juliette did not seem to hear his approach across the turf where the goats fed now, but stood with her back toward him, a few feet below him, actually in that breach effected long ago by those pestilential English. They must have prized out the great stones with crowbars and torn them down with their bare hands.

Juliette was looking over the vineyards toward the river, which gleamed across the horizon. She was humming to herself the last lines of the song:

D'un bout du monde
A l'autre bout,
Le Hasard seul fait tout.

She turned with a pretty swing of her skirts to gather them in her hand.

"You must go no farther, mademoiselle," said Loo.

She stopped, half bending to take her skirt, but did not look back. Then she took two steps downward from stone to stone. The blocks were half embedded in the turf and looked ready to fall under the smallest additional weight.

"It is not I who say so, but your father who sent me," explained the admonisher from above.

"Since it is all chance— " she said, looking downward.

She turned suddenly and looked up at him with that impatience which gives way in later life to a philosophy infinitely to be dreaded when it comes ; for its real name is Indifference.

Her movements were spasmodic and quick as if something angered her, she knew not what ; as if she wanted something, she knew not what.

"I suppose," she said, "that it was chance that saved our lives that night two months ago, out there."

And she stood with one hand stretched out behind her pointing toward the estuary, which was quiet enough now, looking up at him with that strange anger or new disquietude —it was hard to tell which—glowing in her eyes. The wind fluttered her hair, which was tied low down with a ribbon in the mode named "à la diable " by some French wit with a sore heart in an old man's breast. For none other could have so aptly described it.

"All chance, mademoiselle," he answered, looking over her head toward the river.

"And it would have been the same had it been only Marie or Marie and Jean in the boat with you ? "

"The boat would have been as solid and the ropes as strong."

"And you ? " asked the girl, with a glance from her persistent eyes.

"Oh no ! " he answered, with a laugh. "I should not have been the same. But you must not continue to stand there, mademoiselle ; the wall is unsafe."

She shrugged her shoulders and stood with half-averted face, looking down at the vineyards which stretched away to the dunes by the river. Her cheeks were oddly flushed.

"Your father sent me to say so," continued Loo, "and

if he sees that you take no heed he will come himself to learn why."

Juliette gave a curt laugh and climbed the declivity toward him. The argument was, it seemed, a sound one. When she reached his level he made a step or two along the path that ran round the enceinte—not toward the house, however—but away from it. She accepted the tacit suggestion, not tacitly, however.

"Shall we not go and tell papa we have returned without mishap?" she amended, with a light laugh.

"No, mademoiselle," he answered. It was his turn to be grave now and she glanced at him with a gleam of satisfaction beneath her lids. She was not content with that, however, but wished to make him angry. So she laughed again and they would have quarrelled if he had not kept his lips firmly closed and looked straight in front of him.

They passed between the unfinished ruin known as the Italian house and the rampart. The Italian house screened them from the windows of that portion of the ancient stabling which the Marquis had made habitable when he bought back the château of Gemosac from the descendant of an adventurous republican to whom the estate had been awarded in the days of the Terror. A walk of lime-trees bordered that part of the garden which lies to the west of the Italian house, and no other part was visible from where Juliette paused to watch the sun sink below the distant horizon. Loo was walking a few paces behind her, and when she stopped he stopped also. She sat down on the low wall, but he remained standing.

Her profile, clear-cut and delicate with its short chin and beautifully curved lips, its slightly aquiline nose and crisp hair rising in a bold curve from her forehead, was outlined

against the sky. He could see the gleam of the western light in her eyes, which were half averted. While she watched the sunset, he watched her with a puzzled expression about his lips.

He remembered perhaps the Marquis's last words, that Juliette was only a child. He knew that she could in all human calculation know nothing of the world ; that at least she could have learned nothing of it in the convent where she had been educated. So, if she knew anything, she must have known it before she went there, which was impossible. She knew nothing, therefore, and yet she was not a child. As a matter of fact, she was the most beautiful woman Loo Barebone had ever seen. He was thinking that as she sat on the low wall, swinging one slipper half falling from her foot, watching the sunset, while he watched her and noted the anger slowly dying from her eyes as the light faded from the sky. That strange anger went down, it would appear, with the sun. After the long silence—when the low bars of red cloud lying across the western sky were fading from pink to grey—she spoke at last in a voice which he had never heard before, gentle and confidential.

"When are you going away ?" she asked.

"To-night."

And he knew that the very hour of his departure was known to her already.

"And when will you come back ?"

"As soon as I can," he answered, half-involuntarily. There was a turn of the head half toward him, something expectant in the tilt at the corner of her parted lips, which made it practically impossible to make any other answer.

"Why ?" she asked, in little more than a whisper—then she broke into a gay laugh and leapt off the wall. She walked quickly past him.

"Why?" she repeated over her shoulder as she passed him. And he was too quick for her, for he caught her hand and touched it with his lips before she jerked it away from him.

"Because you are here," he answered, with a laugh. But she was grave again and looked at him with a queer searching glance before she turned away and left him standing in the half-light—thinking of Miriam Liston.

CHAPTER XX

"NINETEEN"

As Juliette returned to the Gate House she encountered her father, walking arm-in-arm with Dormer Colville. The presence of the Englishman within the enceinte of the château was probably no surprise to her, for she must have heard the clang of the bell just within the gate, which could not be opened from outside; by which alone access was gained to any part of the château.

Colville was in riding costume. It was, indeed, his habitual dress when living in France, for he made no concealment of his partnership in a well-known business house in Bordeaux.

"I am a sleeping partner," he would say, with that easy flow of egotistic confidence which is the surest way of learning somewhat of your neighbour's private affairs. "I am a sleeping partner at all times except the vintage, when I awake and ride round among the growers, to test their growth."

It was too early yet for these journeys, for the grapes were hardly ripe. But any one who wished to move from place to place must needs do so in the saddle in a country where land is so valuable that the width of a road is grudged, and bridle-ways are deemed good enough for the passage of the long and narrow carts that carry wine.

Ever since their somewhat precipitate departure from

the Villa Cordouan at Royan, Dormer Colville and Barebone had been in company. They had stayed together, in one friend's house or another. Sometimes they enjoyed the hospitality of a château, and at others put up with the scanty accommodation of a priest's house or the apartment of a retired military officer, in one of those little towns of provincial France at which the cheap journalists of Paris are pleased to sneer without ceasing.

They avoided the large towns with extraordinary care.

"Why should we go to towns," asked Colville, jovially, "when we have business in the country and the sun is still high in the sky?"

"Yes," he would reply to the questions of an indiscreet fellow-traveller, at table or on the road. "Yes; I am a buyer of wine. We are buyers of wine. We are travelling from place to place to watch the growth. For the wine is hidden in the grape, and the grape is ripening."

And, as often as not, the chance acquaintance of an inn déjeuner would catch the phrase and repeat it thoughtfully.

"Ah! is that so?" he would ask, with a sudden glance at Dormer Colville's companion, who had hitherto passed unobserved as the silent subordinate of a large buyer; learning his trade, no doubt. "The grape is ripening. Good!"

And as sure as he seemed to be struck with this statement of a self-evident fact, he would, in the next few minutes, bring the numeral "nineteen"—*tant bien que mal*—into his conversation.

"With nineteen days of sun, the vintage will be upon us," he would say; or, "I have but nineteen kilometres more of road before me to-day."

Indeed, it frequently happened that the word came in very inappropriately, as if tugged heroically to the front by a clumsy conversationalist.

There is no hazard of life so certain to discover sympathy or antagonism as travel—a fact which points to the wisdom of beginning married life with a journey. The majority of people like to know the worst at once. To travel, however, with Dormer Colville was a liberal education in the virtues. No man could be less selfish or less easily fatigued ; which are the two bases upon which rest all the stumbling-blocks of travel.

Up to a certain point, Barebone and Dormer Colville became fast friends during the month that elapsed between their departure from Mrs. St. Pierre Lawrence's house and their arrival at the inn at Gemosac. The " White Horse," at Gemosac, was no better and no worse than any other " White Horse " in any other small town of France. It was, however, better than the principal inn of a town of the same size in any other habitable part of the globe.

There were many reasons why the Marquis de Gemosac had yielded to Colville's contention—that the time had not yet come for Loo Barebone to be his guest at the château.

" He is inclined to be indolent," Colville had whispered. " One recognises, in many traits of character, the source from whence his blood is drawn. He will not exert himself so long as there is some one else at hand who is prepared to take trouble. He must learn that it is necessary to act for himself. He needs rousing. Let him travel through France, and see for himself that of which he has as yet only learnt at second-hand. That will rouse him."

And the journey through the valleys of the Garonne and the Dordogne had been undertaken.

Another, greater journey, was now afoot, to end at no less a centre of political life than Paris. A start was to be made this evening, and Dormer Colville now came to report that all was ready and the horses at the gate.

"If there were scenes such as this for all of us to linger in, mademoiselle," he said, lifting his face to the western sky and inhaling the scent of the flowers growing knee-deep all around him, "men would accomplish little in their brief lifetime."

His eyes, dreamy and reflective, wandered over the scene and paused, just for a moment in passing, on Juliette's face. She continued her way, with no other answer than a smile.

"She grows, my dear Marquis—she grows every minute of the day and wakes up a new woman every morning," said Colville, in a confidential aside, and he went forward to meet Loo with his accustomed laugh of good-fellowship. He whom the world calls a good fellow is never a wise man.

Barebone walked toward the gate without joining in the talk of his companions. He was thoughtful and uneasy. He had come to say good-bye and nothing else. He was wondering if he had really meant what he had said.

"Come," interrupted Colville's smooth voice. "We must get into the saddle and begone. I was just telling Monsieur and Mademoiselle Juliette, that any man might be tempted to linger at Gemosac until the active years of a lifetime rolled by."

The Marquis made the needful reply; hoping that he might yet live to see Gemosac—and not only Gemosac, but a hundred châteaux like it—reawakened to their ancient glory, and thrown open to welcome the restorer of their fallen fortunes.

Colville looked from one to the other, and then, with his foot in the stirrup, turned to look at Juliette, who had followed them to the gate.

"And mademoiselle," he said; "will she wish us good

luck, also? Alas! those times are gone when we could have asked for her ribbon to wear, and to fight for between ourselves when we are tired and cross at the end of a journey. Come, Barebone—into the saddle."

They waited, both looking at Juliette; for she had not spoken.

"I wish you good luck," she said, at length, patting the neck of Colville's horse, her face wearing a little mystic smile.

Thus they departed, at sunset, on a journey of which old men will still talk in certain parts of France. Here and there, in the Angoumois, in Guienne, in the Vendée, and in the western parts of Brittany, the student of forgotten history may find an old priest who will still persist in dividing France into the ancient provinces, and will tell how Hope rode through the Royalist country when he himself was busy at his first cure.

The journey lasted nearly two months, and before they passed north of the Loire at Nantes and quitted the wine country, the vintage was over.

"We must say that we are cider merchants, that is all," observed Dormer Colville, when they crossed the river, which has always been the great divider of France.

"He is sobering down. I believe he will become serious," wrote he to the Marquis de Gemosac. But he took care to leave Loo Barebone as free as possible.

"I am, in a way, a compulsory pilot," he explained, airily, to his companion. "The ship is yours, and you probably know more about the shoals than I do. You must have felt that a hundred times when you were at sea with that solemn old sailor, Captain Clubbe. And yet, before you could get into port, you found yourself forced to take the compulsory pilot on board and make him welcome with

such grace as you could command, feeling all the while that he did not want to come and you could have done as well without him. So you must put up with my company as gracefully as you can, remembering that you can drop me as soon as you are in port."

And surely, none other could have occupied an uncomfortable position so gracefully.

Barebone found that he had not much to do. He soon accommodated himself to a position which required nothing more active than a ready ear and a gracious patience. For, day by day—almost hour by hour—it was his lot to listen to protestations of loyalty to a cause which smouldered none the less hotly because it was hidden from the sight of the Prince President's spies.

And, as Colville had predicted, Barebone sobered down. He would ride now, hour after hour, in silence, whereas at the beginning of the journey he had talked gaily enough, seeing a hundred humorous incidents in the passing events of the day ; laughing at the recollection of an interview with some provincial notable who had fallen behind the times, or jesting readily enough with such as showed a turn for joking on the road.

But now the unreality of his singular change of fortune was vanishing. Every village priest who came after dark to take a glass of wine with them at their inn sent it farther into the past, every provincial noble greeting him on the step of his remote and quiet house added a note to the drumming reality which dominated his waking moments and disturbed his sleep at night.

Day by day they rode on, passing through two or three villages between such halts as were needed by the horses. At every hamlet, in the large villages, where they rested and had their food, at the remote little town where they passed

a night, there was always some one expecting them, who came and talked of the weather and more or less skilfully brought in the numeral nineteen. " Nineteen ! Nineteen ! " It was a watchword all over France.

Long before, on the banks of the Dordogne, Loo had asked his companion why that word had been selected—what it meant.

" It means Louis XIX.," replied Dormer Colville, gravely.

And now, as they rode through a country so rural, so thinly populated and remote that nothing like it may be found in these crowded islands, the number seemed to follow them ; or, rather, to pass on before them and await their coming.

Often Colville would point silently with his whip to the numerals, scrawled on a gate-post or written across a wall. At this time France was mysteriously flooded with cheap portraits of the great Napoleon. It was before the days of pictorial advertisement, and young ladies who wished to make an advantageous marriage had no means of advertising the fact and themselves in supplements to illustrated papers. The walls of inns and shops and *diligence* offices were therefore barer than they are to-day. And from these bare walls stared out at this time the well-known face of the great Napoleon. It was an innovation, and as such readily enough accepted.

At every fair, at the great fête of St. Jean, at St. Jean d'Angély and a hundred other fêtes of purely local notoriety, at least one hawker of cheap lithographs was to be found. And if the buyer haggled, he could get the portrait of the great Emperor for almost nothing.

" One cannot print it at such a cost," the seller assured his purchasers, which was no less than the truth.

The fairs were, and are to this day, the link between the

remoter villages and the world; and the peasants carried home with them a picture, for the first time, to hang on their walls. Thus the Prince President fostered the Napoleonic legend.

Dormer Colville would walk up to these pictures, and, as often as not, would turn and look over his shoulder at Barebone, with a short laugh. For as often as not, the numerals were scrawled across the face in pencil.

But Barebone had ceased to laugh at the constant repetition now. Soon Colville ceased to point out the silent witness, for he perceived that Loo was looking for it himself, detecting its absence with a gleam of determination in his eyes or noting its recurrence with a sharp sigh, as of the consciousness of a great responsibility.

Thus the reality was gradually forced upon him that that into which he had entered half in jest was no jest at all; that he was moving forward on a road which seemed easy enough, but of which the end was not perceptible; neither was there any turning to one side or the other.

All men who have made a mark—whether it be a guiding or warning sign to those that follow—must at one moment of their career have perceived their road before them, thus. Each must have realised that once set out upon that easy path there is no turning aside and no turning back. And many have chosen to turn back while there was yet time, leaving the mark unmade. For most men are cowards and shun responsibility. Most men unconsciously steer their way by proverb or catchword; and all the wise saws of all the nations preach cowardice.

Barebone saw his road now, and Dormer Colville knew that he saw it.

When they crossed the Loire they passed the crisis, and Colville breathed again like one who had held his breath for

long. Those colder, sterner men of Brittany, who, in later times, compared notes with the nobles of Guienne and the Vendée, seemed to talk of a different man; for they spoke of one who rarely laughed, and never turned aside from a chosen path which was in no wise bordered by flowers.

CHAPTER XXI

NO. 8 RUELLE ST. JACOB

BETWEEN the Rue de Lille and the Boulevard St. Germain, in the narrow streets which to this day have survived the sweeping influence of Baron Haussmann, once Prefect of the Seine, there are many houses which scarcely seem to have opened door or window since the great Revolution.

One of these, to be precise, is situated in the Ruelle St. Jacob, hardly wider than a lane—a short street with a blind end against high walls—into which any vehicle that enters must needs do so with the knowledge of having to back out again. For there is no room to turn. Which is an allegory. All the windows, in fact, that look forlornly at the blank walls or peep over the high gateways into the Ruelle St. Jacob are Royalist windows looking into a street which is blinded by a high wall and is too narrow to allow of turning.

Many of the windows would appear to have gathered dust since those days more than a hundred years ago when white faces peeped from them and trembling hands unbarred the sash to listen to the roar of voices in the Rue du Bac, in the open space by the church of St. Germain des Près, in the Cité, all over Paris, where the people were making history.

To this house in the Ruelle St. Jacob, Dormer Colville and Loo Barebone made their way on foot, on their arrival in Paris at the termination of their long journey.

It was nearly dark, for Colville had arranged to approach the city and leave their horses at a stable at Meudon after dusk.

"It is foolish," he said, gaily, to his companion, "to flaunt a face like yours in Paris by daylight."

They had driven from Meudon in a hired carriage to the corner of the Champ de Mars, in those days still innocent of glass houses and exhibition buildings, for Paris was not yet the toy-shop of the world; and from the Champ de Mars they came on foot through the ill-paved, feebly lighted streets. In the Ruelle St. Jacob itself there was only one lamp, burning oil, swinging at the corner. The remainder of the lane depended for its illumination on the windows of two small shops retailing firewood and pickled gherkins and balls of string grey with age, as do all the shops in the narrow streets on the wrong side of the Seine.

Dormer Colville led the way, picking his steps from side to side of the gutter which meandered odoriferously down the middle of the street toward the river. He stopped in front of the great gateway and looked up at the arch of it, where the stone carving had been carefully obliterated by some enthusiastic citizen armed with a hatchet.

"Ichabod," he said, with a short laugh; and cautiously laid hold of the dangling bell-handle which had summoned the porter to open to a Queen in those gay days when Marie Antoinette light-heartedly pushed a falling monarchy down the incline.

The great gate was not opened in response, but a small side door, deep-sunken in the thickness of the wall. On either jamb of the door was affixed in the metal letters ordained by the municipality the number eight. Number Eight Ruelle St. Jacob had once been known to kings as the Hôtel Gemosac.

The man who opened carried a lantern and held the door ajar with a grudging hand while he peered out. One could almost imagine that he had survived the downfall and the Restoration, and a couple of republics, behind the high walls.

The court-yard was paved with round cobble-stones no bigger than an apple, and, even by the flickering light of the lantern, it was perceptible that no weed had been allowed to grow between the stones or in the seams of the wide, low steps that led to an open door.

The house appeared to be dark and deserted.

"Yes, Monsieur le Marquis—Monsieur le Marquis is at home," muttered the man with a bronchial chuckle, and led the way across the yard. He wore a sort of livery, which must have been put away for years. A young man had been measured for the coat which now displayed three deep creases across a bent back.

"Attention—attention!" he said, in a warning voice, while he scraped a sulphur match in the hall. "There are holes in the carpets. It is easy to trip and fall."

He lighted the candle, and after having carefully shut and bolted the door, he led the way upstairs. At their approach, easily audible in the empty house by reason of the hollow creaking of the oak floor, a door was opened at the head of the stairs and a flood of light met the new-comers.

In the doorway, which was ten feet high, the little bent form of the Marquis de Gemosac stood waiting.

"Ah! ah!" he said, with that pleasant manner of his generation, which was refined and spirituelle and sometimes dramatic, and yet ever failed to touch aught but the surface of life. "Ah! ah! Safely accomplished—the great journey. Safely accomplished. You permit——"

And he embraced Barebone after the custom of his day.

"From all sides," he said, when the door was closed, "I

hear that you have done great things. From every quarter one hears your praise."

He held him at arm's length.

"Yes," he said. "Your face is graver and—more striking in resemblance than ever. So now you know—now you have seen."

"Yes," answered Barebone, gravely. "I have seen and I know."

The Marquis rubbed his white hands together and gave a little crackling laugh of delight as he drew forward a chair to the fire, which was of logs as long as a barrel. The room was a huge one, and it was lighted from end to end with lamps, as if for a reception or a ball. The air was damp and mouldly. There were patches of grey on the walls, which had once been painted with garlands of roses and Cupids and pastoral scenes by a noted artist of the Great Age.

The ceiling had fallen in places, and the woodwork of the carved furniture gave forth a subtle scent of dry rot.

But everything was in an exquisite taste which vulgarer generations have never yet succeeded in imitating. Nothing was concealed, but rather displayed with a half-cynical pride. All was moth-ridden, worm-eaten, fallen to decay—but it was of the Monarchy. Not half a dozen houses in Paris, where already the wealth, which has to-day culminated in a ridiculous luxury of outward show, was beginning to build new palaces, could show room after room furnished in the days of the Great Louis. The very air, faintly scented it would seem by some forgotten perfume, breathed of a bygone splendour. And the last of the de Gemosacs scorned to screen his poverty from the eyes of his equals, nor sought to hide from them a desolation which was only symbolic of that which crushed their hearts and bade them steal back from time to time like criminals to the capital.

"You see," he said to Colville and Barebone, "I have kept my promise, I have thrown open this old house once more for to-night's meeting. You will find that many friends have made the journey to Paris for the occasion—Madame de Chantonnay and Albert, Madame de Rathe and many from the Vendée and the West whom you have met on your journey. And to-night one may speak without fear, for none will be present who are not vouched for by the Almanac de Gotha. There are no Royalists *pour rire* or *pour vivre* to-night. You have but time to change your clothes and dine. Your luggage arrived yesterday. You will forgive the stupidity of old servants who have forgotten their business. Come, I will lead the way and show you your rooms."

He took a candle and did the honours of the deserted dust-ridden house in the manner of the high calling which had been his twenty years ago when Charles X. was king. For some there lingers a certain pathos in the sight of a belated survival, while the majority of men and women are ready to smile at it instead. And yet the Monarchy lasted eight centuries and the Revolution eight years. Perhaps Fate may yet exact payment for the excesses of those eight years from a nation for which the watching world already prepares a secondary place in the councils of empire.

The larger room had been assigned to Loo. There was a subtle difference in the Marquis's manner toward him. He made an odd bow as he quitted the room.

"There," said Colville, whose room communicated with this great apartment by a dressing-room and two doors. He spoke in English, as they always did when they were alone together. "There—you are launched. You are *lancé*, my friend. I may say you are through the shoals now and out on the high seas——"

He paused, candle in hand, and looked round the room with a reflective smile. It was obviously the best room in the house, with a fireplace as wide as a gate, where logs of pine burnt briskly on high iron dogs. The bed loomed mysteriously in one corner with its baldachin of Gobelin tapestry. Here, too, the dim scent of fallen monarchy lingered in the atmosphere. A portrait of Louis XVI. in a faded frame hung over the mantelpiece.

"And the time will come," pursued Colville, with his melancholy, sympathetic smile, "when you will find it necessary to drop the pilot—to turn your face seaward and your back upon old recollections and old associations. You cannot make an omelette without breaking eggs, my friend."

"Oh yes," replied Barebone, with a brisk movement of the head, "I shall have to forget Farlingford."

Colville had moved toward the door that led to his own room. He paused, examining the wick of the candle he carried in his hand. Then, though glib of speech, he decided in favour of silence, and went away without making reply.

Loo sat down in a grey old arm-chair in front of the fire. The house was astoundingly noiseless, though situated in what had once been the heart of Paris. It was one of the few houses left in this quarter with a large garden. And the traffic passing in and out of the Ruelle St. Jacob went slipshod on its own feet. The busy crackle of the wood was the only sound to break a silence which seemed part of this vast palace of memories.

Loo had ridden far and was tired. He smiled grimly at the fire. It is to be supposed that he was sitting down to the task he had set himself—to forget Farlingford.

There was a great reception at the Hotel Gemosac that

night, and after twenty years of brooding silence the rooms, hastily set in order, were lighted up.

There was, as the Marquis had promised, no man or woman present who was not vouched for by a noble name or by history. As the old man presented them, their names were oddly familiar to the ear, while each face looking at Loo seemed to be the face of a ghost looking out of a past which the world will never forget so long as history lives.

And here, again, was the subtle difference. They no longer talked to Loo, but stood apart and spoke among themselves in a hushed voice. Men made their bow to him and met his smile with grave and measuring eyes. Some made a little set speech, which might mean much or nothing. Others embarked on such a speech and paused—faltered, and passed on gulping something down in their throats.

Women made a deep reverence to him and glanced at him with parted lips and white faces—no coquetry in their eyes. They saw that he was young and good-looking; but they forgot that he might think the same of them. Then they passed on and grouped themselves together, as women do in moments of danger or emotion, their souls instinctively seeking the company of other souls tuned to catch a hundred passing vibrations of the heart-strings of which men remain in ignorance. They spoke together in lowered voices without daring, or desiring perhaps, to turn and look at him again.

"It only remains," some one said, "for the Duchesse d'Angoulême to recognise his claim. A messenger has departed for Frohsdorf."

And Barebone, looking at them, knew that there was a barrier between him and them which none could cast aside: a barrier erected in the past and based on the sure foundations of history.

"She is an old woman," said Monsieur de Gemosac to any who spoke to him on this subject. "She is seventy-two, and fifty-eight of those years have been marked by greater misfortunes than ever fell to the lot of a woman. When she came out of prison she had no tears left, my friends. We cannot expect her to turn back willingly to the past now. But we know that in her heart she has never been sure that her brother died in the Temple. You know how many disappointments she has had. We must not awake her sleeping sorrow until all is ready. I shall make the journey to Frohsdorf—that I promise you. But to-night we have another task before us."

"Yes—yes," answered his listeners. "You are to open the locket. Where is it?—show it to us."

And the locket which Captain Clubbe's wife had given to Dormer Colville was handed from one to another. It was not of great value, but it was of gold with stones, long since discoloured, set in silver around it. It was crushed and misshapen.

"It has never been opened for twenty years," they told each other. "It has been mislaid in an obscure village in England for nearly half a century."

"The Vicomte de Castel Aunet—who is so clever a mechanician—has promised to bring his tools," said Monsieur de Gemosac. "He will open it for us—even if he find it necessary to break the locket."

So the thing went round the room until it came to Loo Barebone.

"I have seen it before," he said. "I think I remember seeing it long ago—when I was a little child."

And he handed it to the old Vicomte de Castel Aunet, whose shaking fingers closed round it in a breathless silence. He carried it to the table, and some one brought candles.

The Vicomte was very old. He had learnt clock-making, they said, in prison during the Terror.

"*Il n'y a moyen*," he whispered to himself. "I must break it."

With one effort he prised up the cover, but the hinge snapped, and the lid rolled across the table into Barebone's hand.

"Ah!" he cried, in that breathless silence, "now I remember it. I remember the red silk lining of the cover, and in the other side there is the portrait of a lady with——"

The Vicomte paused, with his palm covering the other half of the locket and looked across at Loo. And the eyes of all Royalist France were fixed on the same face.

"Silence!" whispered Dormer Colville in English, crushing Barebone's foot under the table.

CHAPTER XXII

DROPPING THE PILOT

"THE portrait of a lady," repeated Loo, slowly. "Young and beautiful. That much I remember."

The old nobleman had never removed his covering hand from the locket. He had never glanced at it himself. He looked slowly round the peering faces, two and three deep round the table. He was the oldest man present—one of the oldest in Paris—one of the few now living who had known Marie Antoinette.

Without uncovering the locket, he handed it to Barebone across the table with a bow worthy of the old régime and his own historic name.

"It is right that you should be the first to see it," he said. "Since there is no longer any doubt that the lady was your father's mother."

Loo took the locket, looked at it with strangely glittering eyes and steady lips. He gave a sort of gasp, which all in the room heard. He was handing it back to the Vicomte de Castel Aunet without a word of comment, when a crashing fall on the bare floor startled every one. A lady had fainted.

"Thank God!" muttered Dormer Colville almost in Barebone's ear and swayed against him. Barebone turned and looked into a face grey and haggard, and shining with perspiration. Instinctively he grasped him by the arm and

supported him. In the confusion of the moment no one noticed Colville; for all were pressing round the prostrate lady. And in a moment Colville was himself again, though the ready smile sat oddly on such white lips.

"For God's sake be careful," he said, and turned away, handkerchief in hand.

For the moment the portrait was forgotten until the lady was on her feet again, smiling reassurances and rubbing her elbow.

"It is nothing," she said, "nothing. My heart—that is all."

And she staggered to a chair with the reassuring smile frozen on her face.

Then the portrait was passed from hand to hand in silence. It was a miniature of Marie Antoinette, painted on ivory, which had turned yellow. The colours were almost lost, but the face stood clearly enough. It was the face of a young girl, long and narrow, with the hair drawn straight up and dressed high and simply on the head without ornament.

"It is she," said one and another. "*C'est bien elle.*"

"It was painted when she was newly a queen," commented the Vicomte de Castel Aunet. "I have seen others like it, but not that one before."

Barebone stood apart and no one offered to approach him. Dormer Colville had gone toward the great fireplace, and was standing by himself there with his back toward the room. He was surreptitiously wiping from his face the perspiration which had suddenly run down it, as one may see the rain running down the face of a statue.

Things had taken an unexpected turn. The Marquis de Gemosac, himself always on the surface, had stirred others more deeply than he had anticipated or could now

understand. France has always been the victim of her own emotions; aroused in the first instance half in idleness, allowed to swell with a semi-restraining laugh, and then suddenly sweeping and overwhelming. History tells of a hundred such crises in the pilgrimage of the French people. A few more—and historians shall write "Ichabod" across the most favoured land in Europe.

It is customary to relate that, after a crisis, those most concerned in it know not how they faced it or what events succeeded it. "He never knew," we are informed, "how he got through the rest of the evening."

Loo Barebone knew and remembered every incident, every glance. He was in full possession of every faculty, and never had each been so keenly alive to the necessity of the moment. Never had his quick brain been so alert as it was during the rest of the evening. And those who had come to the Hotel Gemosac to confirm their adoption of a figure-head went away with the startling knowledge in their hearts that they had never in the course of an artificial life met a man less suited to play that undignified part.

And all the while, in the back of his mind, there lingered with a deadly patience the desire for the moment which must inevitably come when he should at last find himself alone, face to face, with Dormer Colville.

It was nearly midnight before this moment came. At last the latest guest had taken his leave, quitting the house by the garden door and making his way across that forlorn and weedy desert by the dim light reflected from the clouds above. At last the Marquis de Gemosac had bidden them good night, and they were left alone in the vast bedroom which a dozen candles, in candelabras of silver blackened by damp and neglect, only served to render more gloomy and mysterious.

In the confusion consequent on the departure of so many guests the locket had been lost sight of, and Monsieur de Gemosac forgot to make inquiry for it. It was in Barebone's pocket.

Colville put together with the toe of his boot the logs which were smouldering in a glow of incandescent heat. He turned and glanced over his shoulder toward his companion.

Barebone was taking the locket from his waistcoat pocket and approaching the table where the candles burnt low in their sockets.

"You never really supposed you were the man, did you?" asked Colville, with a ready smile. He was brave, at all events, for he took the only course left to him with a sublime assurance.

Barebone looked across the candles at the face which smiled, and smiled.

"That is what I thought," he answered, with a queer laugh.

"Do not jump to any hasty decisions," urged Colville instantly, as if warned by the laugh.

"No! I want to sift the matter carefully to the bottom. It will be interesting to learn who are the deceived and who the deceivers."

Barebone had had time to think out a course of action. His face seemed to puzzle Colville, who was rarely at fault in such judgments of character as came within his understanding. But he seemed for an instant to be on the threshold of something beyond his understanding; and yet he had lived, almost day and night, for some months with Barebone. Since the beginning—that far-off beginning at Farlingford—their respective positions had been quite clearly defined. Colville, the elder by nearly twenty years, had

always been the guide and mentor and friend—the compulsory pilot he had gaily called himself. He had a vast experience of the world. He had always moved in the best French society. All that he knew, all the influence he could command, and the experience upon which he could draw were unreservedly at Barebone's service. The difference in years had only affected their friendship in so far as it defined their respective positions and prohibited any thought of rivalry. Colville had been the unquestioned leader, Barebone the ready disciple.

And now in the twinkling of an eye the positions were reversed. Colville stood watching Barebone's face with eyes rendered almost servile by a great suspense. He waited breathless for the next words.

"This portrait," said Barebone, "of the Queen was placed in the locket by you?"

Colville nodded with a laugh of conscious cleverness rewarded by complete success. There was nothing in his companion's voice to suggest suppressed anger. It was all right after all. "I had great difficulty in finding just what I wanted," he added, modestly.

"What I remember—though the memory is necessarily vague—was a portrait of a woman older than this. Her style of dress was more elaborate. Her hair was dressed differently, with sort of curls at the side, and on the top, half buried in the hair, was the imitation of a nest—a dove's nest. Such a thing would naturally stick in a child's memory. It stuck in mine."

"Yes—and nearly gave the game away to-night," said Colville, gulping down the memory of those tense moments.

"That portrait—the original—you have not destroyed it?"

"Oh no. It is of some value," replied Colville, almost

naïvely. He felt in his pocket and produced a silver cigar-case. The miniature was wrapped in a piece of thin paper, which he unfolded. Barebone took the painting and examined it with a little nod of recognition. His memory had not failed after twenty years.

"Who is this lady?" he asked.

Dormer Colville hesitated.

"Do you know the history of that period?" he inquired, after a moment's reflection. For the last hour he had been trying to decide on a course of conduct. During the last few minutes he had been forced to change it half a dozen times.

"Septimus Marvin, of Farlingford, is one of the greatest living authorities on those reigns. I learnt a good deal from him," was the answer.

"That lady is, I think, the Duchesse de Guiche."

"You think——"

"Even Marvin could not tell you for certain," replied Colville, mildly. He did not seem to perceive a difference in Barebone's manner toward himself. The quickest intelligence cannot follow another's mind beyond its own depth.

"Then the inference is that my father was the illegitimate son of the Comte d'Artois."

"Afterward Charles X., of France," supplemented Colville, significantly.

"Is that the inference?" persisted Barebone. "I should like to know your opinion. You must have studied the question very carefully. Your opinion should be of some interest, though——"

"Though—" echoed Colville, interrogatively, and regretted it immediately.

"Though it is impossible to say when you speak the truth and when you lie."

And any who doubted that there was royal blood in Loo Barebone's veins would assuredly have been satisfied by a glance at his face at that moment; by the sound of his quiet, judicial voice; by the sudden and almost terrifying sense of power in his measuring eyes.

Colville turned away with an awkward laugh and gave his attention to the logs on the hearth. Then suddenly he regained his readiness of speech.

"Look here, Barebone," he cried. "We must not quarrel; we cannot afford to do that. And after all, what does it matter? You are only giving yourself the benefit of the doubt—that is all. For there is a doubt. You may be what you—what we say you are, after all. It is certain enough that Marie Antoinette and Fersen were in daily correspondence. They were both clever—two of the cleverest people in France—and they were both desperate. Remember that. Do you think that they would have failed in a matter of such intense interest to her, and therefore to him? All these pretenders, Naundorff and the others, have proved that quite clearly, but none has succeeded in proving that he was the man."

"And do you think that I shall be able to prove that I am the man—when I am not?"

By way of reply Dormer Colville turned again to the fireplace and took down the print of Louis XVI. engraved from a portrait painted when he was still Dauphin. A mirror stood near, and Colville came to the table carrying the portrait in one hand, the looking-glass in the other.

"Here," he said, eagerly. "Look at one and then at the other. Look in the mirror and then at the portrait. Prove it! Why, God has proved it for you."

"I do not think we had better bring Him into the question," was the retort: an odd reflex of Captain Clubbe's

solid East Anglian piety. "No. If we go on with the thing at all, let us be honest enough to admit to ourselves that we are dishonest. The portrait in that locket points clearly enough to the Truth."

"The portrait in that locket is of Marie Antoinette," replied Colville, half sullenly. "And no one can ever prove anything contrary to that. No one except myself knows of —of this doubt which you have stumbled upon. De Gemosac, Parson Marvin, Clubbe—all of them are convinced that your father was the Dauphin."

"And Miss Liston?"

"Miriam Liston—she also, of course. And I believe she knew it long before I told her."

Barebone turned and looked at him squarely in the eyes. Colville wondered a second time why Loo Barebone reminded him of Captain Clubbe to-night.

"What makes you believe that?" he asked.

"Oh, I don't know. But that isn't the question. The question is about the future. You see how things are in France. It is a question of Louis Napoleon or a monarchy —you see that. Unless you stop him he will be Emperor before a year is out, and he will drag France in the gutter. He is less a Bonaparte than you are a Bourbon. You remember that Louis Bonaparte himself was the first to say so. He wrote a letter to the Pope, saying so quite clearly. You will go on with it, of course, Barebone. Say you will go on with it! To turn back now would be death. We could not do it if we wanted to. I have been trying to think about it, and I cannot. That is the truth. It takes one's breath away. At the mere thought of it I feel as if I were getting out of my depth."

"We have been out of our depths the last month," admitted Barebone, curtly.

And he stood reflecting, while Colville watched him.

"If I go on," he said, at length, "I go on alone."

"Better not," urged Colville, with a laugh of great relief. "For you would always have me and my knowledge hanging over you. If you succeeded, you would have me dunning you for hush-money."

Which seemed true enough. Few men knew more of one side of human nature than Dormer Colville, it would appear.

"I am not afraid of that."

"You can never tell," laughed Colville, but his laugh rather paled under Barebone's glance. "You can never tell."

"Wise men do not attempt to blackmail—kings."

And Colville caught his breath.

"Perhaps you are right," he admitted, after a pause. "You seem to be taking to the position very kindly, Barebone. But I do not mind, you know. It does not matter what we say to each other, eh? We have been good friends so long. You must do as you like. And if you succeed, I must be content to leave my share of the matter to your consideration. You certainly seem to know the business already, and some day perhaps you will remember who taught you to be a King."

"It was an old North Sea skipper who taught me that," replied Barebone. "That is one of the things I learnt at sea."

"Yes—yes," agreed Colville, almost nervously. "And you will go on with the thing, will you not? Like a good fellow, eh? Think about it till to-morrow morning. I will go now. Which is my candle? Yes. You will think about it. Do not jump to any hasty decision."

He hurried to the door as he spoke. He could not understand Barebone at all.

"If I do go on with it," was the reply, "it will not be in response to any of your arguments. It will be only and solely for the sake of France."

"Yes—of course," agreed Colville, and closed the door behind him.

In his own room he turned and looked toward the door leading through to that from which he had hurriedly escaped. He passed his hand across his face, which was white and moist.

"For the sake of France!" he echoed in bewilderment. "For the sake of France! Gad! I believe he *is* the man after all."

CHAPTER XXIII

A SIMPLE BANKER

Mr. John Turner had none of the outward signs of the discreet adviser in his person or surroundings. He had, it was currently whispered, inherited from his father an enormous clientèle of noble names. And to such as have studied the history of Paris during the whole of the nineteenth century, it will appear readily comprehensible that the careful or the penniless should give preference to an English banker.

Mr. Turner's appearance suggested solidity, and the carpet of his private room was a good one. The room smelt of cigar smoke, while the office, through which the client must pass to reach it, was odoriferous of ancient ledgers.

Half a dozen clerks were seated in the office, which was simply furnished and innocent of iron safes. If a client entered, one of the six, whose business it was, looked up, while the other five continued to give their attention to the books before them.

One cold morning, toward the end of the year, Mrs. St. Pierre Lawrence was admitted by the concierge. She noted that only one clerk gave heed to her entry, and, it is to be presumed, the quiet perfection of her furs.

"Of the six young men in your office," she observed, when she was seated in the bare wooden chair placed invitingly by the side of John Turner's writing-table, "only one appears to be in full possession of his senses."

Turner, sitting—if the expression be allowed—in a heap in an armchair before a table provided with pens, ink, and a blotting-pad, but otherwise bare, looked at his client with a bovine smile.

"I don't pay them to admire my clients," he replied.

"If Mademoiselle de Montijo came in, I suppose the other five would not look up."

John Turner settled himself a little lower into his chair, so that he appeared to be in some danger of slipping under the table.

"If the Archangel Gabriel came in, they would still attend to their business," he replied, in his thick, slow voice. "But he won't. He is not one of my clients. Quite the contrary."

Mrs. St. Pierre Lawrence smoothed the fur that bordered her neat jacket and glanced sideways at her banker. Then she looked round the room. It was bare enough. A single picture hung on the wall—a portrait of an old lady. Mrs. St. Pierre Lawrence raised her eyebrows, and continued her scrutiny. Here, again, was no iron safe. There were no ledgers, no diaries, no note-books, no paraphernalia of business. Nothing but a bare table and John Turner seated at it, in a much more comfortable chair than that provided for the client, staring apathetically at a date-case which stood on a bare mantelpiece.

The lady's eyes returned to the portrait on the wall.

"You used to have a portrait of Louis Philippe there," she said.

"When Louis Philippe was on the throne," admitted the banker.

"And now?" inquired this daughter of Eve, looking at the portrait.

"My maternal aunt," replied Turner, making a gesture

with two fingers, as if introducing his client to the portrait.

"You keep her, one may suppose, as a stop-gap—between the dynasties. It is so safe—a maternal aunt!"

"One cannot hang a republic on the wall, however much one may want to."

"Then you are a Royalist?" inquired Mrs. St. Pierre Lawrence.

"No; I am only a banker," replied Turner, with his chin sinking lower on his bulging waistcoat and his eyes scarcely visible beneath the heavy lids.

The remark, coupled with a thought that Turner was going to sleep, seemed to remind the client of her business.

"Will you kindly ask one of your clerks to let me know how much money I have?" she said, casting a glance not wholly innocent of scornful reproach at the table, so glaringly devoid of the bare necessities of a banking business.

"Only eleven thousand francs and fourteen sous," replied Turner, with a promptness which seemed to suggest that he kept no diary or note-book on the table before him because he had need of neither.

"I feel sure I must have more than that," said Mrs. St. Pierre Lawrence, with some spirit. "I quite thought I had."

But John Turner only moistened his lips and sat patiently gazing at the date. His attitude dimly suggested —quite in a nice way—that the chair upon which Mrs. St. Pierre Lawrence sat was polished bright by the garments of persons who had found themselves labouring under the same error.

"Well, I must have a hundred thousand francs to-morrow; that is all. Simply must. And in notes, too. I told you I should want it when you came to see me at Royan. You must remember. I told you at luncheon."

"When we were eating a sweetbread *aux champignons*. I remember perfectly. We do not get sweetbreads like that in Paris."

And John Turner shook his head sadly.

"Well, will you let me have the money to-morrow morning—in notes?"

"I remember I advised you not to sell just now; after we had finished the sweetbread and had gone on to a *crême renversée*—very good one, too. Yes, it is a bad time to sell. Things are uncertain in France just now. One cannot even get one's meals properly served. Cook's head is full of politics, I suppose."

"To-morrow morning—in notes," repeated Mrs. St. Pierre Lawrence.

"Now, your man at Royan was excellent—kept his head all through—and a light hand, too. Got him with you in Paris?"

"No, I have not. To-morrow morning, about ten o'clock—in notes."

And Mrs. St. Pierre Lawrence tapped a neat gloved finger on the corner of the table with some determination.

"I remember—at dessert—you told me you wanted to realise a considerable sum of money at the beginning of the year, to put into some business venture. Is this part of that sum?"

"Yes," returned the lady, arranging her veil.

"A venture of Dormer Colville's, I think you told me—while we were having coffee. One never gets coffee hot enough in a private house, but yours was all right."

"Yes," mumbled Mrs. St. Pierre Lawrence, behind her quick finger, busy with the veil.

Beneath the sleepy lids John Turner's eyes, which were small and deep-sunken in the flesh, like the eyes of a pig,

noted in passing that his client's cheeks were momentarily pink.

"I hope you don't mean to suggest that there is anything unsafe in Mr. Colville as a business man?"

"Heaven forbid!" ejaculated Turner. "On the contrary, he is most enterprising. And I know no one who smokes a better cigar than Colville—when he can get it. And the young fellow seemed nice enough."

"Which young fellow?" inquired the lady, sharply.

"His young friend—the man who was with him. I think you told me, after luncheon, that Colville required the money to start his young friend in business."

"Never!" laughed Mrs. St. Pierre Lawrence, who, if she felt momentarily uneasy, was quickly reassured. For this was one of those fortunate ladies who go through life with the comforting sense of being always cleverer than their neighbour. If the neighbour happen to be a man, and a stout one, the conviction is the stronger for those facts. "Never! I never told you that. You must have dreamt it."

"Perhaps I did," admitted the banker, placidly. "I am afraid I often feel sleepy after luncheon. Perhaps I dreamt it. But I could not hand such a sum in notes to an unprotected lady, even if I can effect a sale of your securities so quickly as to have the money ready by to-morrow morning. Perhaps Colville will call for it himself."

"If he is in Paris."

"Every one is in Paris now," was Mr. Turner's opinion. "And if he likes to bring his young friend with him, all the better. In these uncertain times it is not fair on a man to hand to him a large sum of money in notes." He paused and jerked his thumb toward the window, which was a double one, looking down into the Rue Lafayette. "There are always people in the streets watching those who pass in

and out of a bank. If a man comes out smiling, with his hand on his pocket, he is followed, and if an opportunity occurs, he is robbed. Better not have it in notes."

"I know," replied Mrs. St. Pierre Lawrence, not troubling further to deceive one so lethargic and simple. "I know that Dormer wants it in notes."

"Then let him come and fetch it."

Mrs. St. Pierre Lawrence rose from her chair and shook her dress into straighter folds, with the air of having accomplished a task which she had known to be difficult, but not impossible to one equipped with wit and self-confidence.

"You will sell the securities, and have it all ready by ten o'clock to-morrow morning," she repeated, with a feminine insistence.

"You shall have the money to-morrow morning, whether I succeed in selling for cash or not," was the reply, and John Turner concealed a yawn with imperfect success.

"A loan?"

"No banker lends—except to kings," replied Turner, stolidly. "Call it an accommodation."

Mrs. St. Pierre Lawrence glanced at him sharply over the fur collar which she was clasping round her neck. Here was a banker, reputed wealthy, who sat in a bare room, without so much as a fireproof safe to suggest riches; a business man of world-wide affairs, who drummed indolent fingers on a bare table; a philosopher with a maxim ever ready to teach, as all maxims do, cowardice in the guise of prudence, selfishness masquerading as worldly wisdom, hard-heartedness passing for foresight. Here was one who seemed to see, and was yet too sleepy to perceive. Mrs. St. Pierre Lawrence was not always sure of her banker, but now, as ever before, one glance at his round, heavy face reassured her. She laughed and went away, well satisfied with the

knowledge, only given to women, of having once more carried out her object with the completeness which is known as twisting round the little finger.

She nodded to Turner, who had ponderously risen from the chair which was more comfortable than the client's seat, and held the door open for her to pass. He glanced at the clock as he did so. And she knew that he was thinking that it was nearly the luncheon hour, so transparent to the feminine perception are the thoughts of men.

When he had closed the door he returned to his writing-table. Like many stout people, he moved noiselessly, and quickly enough when the occasion demanded haste.

He wrote three letters in a very few minutes, and, when they were addressed, he tapped on the table with the end of his pen-holder, which brought, in the twinkling of an eye, that clerk whose business it was to abandon his books when called.

"I shall not go out to luncheon until I have the written receipt for each one of those letters," said the banker, knowing that until he went out to luncheon his six clerks must needs go hungry. "Not an answer," he explained, "but a receipt in the addressee's writing."

And while the clerk hurried from the room and down the stone stairs at a break-neck speed, Turner sank back into his chair, with lustreless eyes fixed on space.

"No one can wait," he was in the habit of saying, "better than I can."

CHAPTER XXIV

THE LANE OF MANY TURNINGS

If John Turner expected Colville to bring Loo Barebone with him to the Rue Lafayette he was, in part, disappointed. Colville arrived in a hired carriage, of which the blinds were partially lowered.

The driver had been instructed to drive into the roomy court-yard of the house of which Turner's office occupied the first floor. Carriages frequently waited there, by the side of a little fountain which splashed all day and all night into a circular basin.

Colville descended from the carriage and turned to speak to Loo, who was left sitting within it. Since the unfortunate night at the Hotel Gemosac, when they had been on the verge of a quarrel, a certain restraint had characterised their intercourse. Colville was shy of approaching the subject upon which they had differed. His easy laugh had not laughed away the grim fact that he had deceived Loo in such a manner that complicity was practically forced upon an innocent man.

Loo had not given his decision yet. He had waited a week, during which time Colville had not dared to ask him whether his mind was made up. There was a sort of recklessness in Loo's manner which at once puzzled and alarmed his mentor. At times he was gay, as he always had been, and in the midst of his gaiety he would turn away with a gloomy face and go to his own room.

To press the question would be to precipitate a catastrophe. Dormer Colville decided to go on as if nothing had happened. It is a compromise with the inconveniences of untruth to which we must all resort at some crisis or another in life.

"I will not be long," he assured Barebone, with a gay laugh. The prospect of handling one hundred thousand francs in notes was perhaps exhilarating; though the actual possession of great wealth would seem to be of the contrary tendency. There is a profound melancholy peculiar to the face of the millionaire. "I shall not be long; for he is a man of his word, and the money will be ready."

John Turner was awaiting his visitor, and gave a large soft hand inertly into Colville's warm grasp.

"I always wish I saw more of you," said the new-comer.

"Is there not enough of me already?" inquired the banker, pointing to the vacant chair, upon which fell the full light of the double window. A smaller window opposite to it afforded a view of the court-yard. And it was at this smaller window that Colville glanced as he sat down, with a pause indicative of reluctance.

Turner saw the glance and noted the reluctance. He concluded, perhaps, in the slow, sure mind that worked behind his little peeping eyes, that Loo Barebone was in the carriage in the court-yard, and that Colville was anxious to return to him as soon as possible.

"It is very kind of you to say that, I am sure," pursued Turner, rousing himself to be pleasant and conversational. "But, although the loss is mine, my dear Colville, the fault is mostly yours. You always know where to find me when you want my society. I am anchored in this chair, whereas one never knows where one has a butterfly like yourself."

"A butterfly that is getting a bit heavy on the wing,"

answered Colville, with his wan and sympathetic smile. He sat forward in the chair in an attitude antipathetic to digression from the subject in hand.

"I do not see any evidence of that. One hears of you here and there in France. I suppose, for instance, you know more than any man in Paris at the present moment of the—" he paused and suppressed a yawn, "the—er—vintage. Anything in it—eh?"

"So far as I could judge, the rains came too late; but I shall be glad to tell you all about it another time. This morning——"

"Yes; I know. You want your money. I have it all ready for you. But I must make out some sort of receipt, you know."

Turner felt vaguely in his pocket, and at last found a letter, from which he tore the blank sheet, while his companion, glancing from time to time at the window, watched him impatiently.

"Seems to me," said Turner, opening his inkstand, "that the vintage of 1850 will not be drunk by a Republic."

"Ah! indeed."

"What do you think?"

"Well, to tell you the truth, my mind was more occupied in the quality of the vintage than in its ultimate fate. If you make out a receipt on behalf of Mrs. St. Pierre Lawrence, I will sign it," answered Colville, fingering the blotting-paper.

"Received on behalf of, and for, Mrs. St. Pierre Lawrence, the sum of one hundred thousand francs," muttered the banker, as he wrote.

"She is only a client, you understand, my dear Colville," he went on, holding out his hand for the blotting-paper, "or I would not part with the money so easily. It is

against my advice that Mrs. St. Pierre Lawrence realises this sum."

"If a woman sets her heart on a thing, my dear fellow——" began Colville, carelessly.

"Yes, I know—reason goes to the wall. Sign there, will you?"

Turner handed him pen and receipt, but Colville was looking toward the window sunk deep in the wall on the inner side of the room. This was not a double window, and the sound of carriage wheels rose above the gentle, continuous plash of the little fountain in the court-yard.

Colville rose from his seat, but to reach the window he had to pass behind Turner's chair. Turner rose at the same moment, and pushed his chair back against the wall in doing so. This passage toward the window being completely closed by the bulk of John Turner, Colville hurried round the writing-table. But Turner was again in front of him, and, without appearing to notice that his companion was literally at his heels, he opened a large cupboard sunk in the panelling of the wall. The door of it folded back over the little window, completely hiding it.

Turning on his heel, with an agility which was quite startling in one so stout, he found Colville's colourless face two feet from his own. In fact, Colville almost stumbled against him. For a moment they looked each other in the eyes in silence. With his right hand, John Turner held the cupboard-door over the window.

"I have the money here," he said, "in this cupboard." And as he spoke, a hollow rumble, echoing in the court-yard, marked the exit of a carriage under the archway into the Rue Lafayette. There had been only one carriage in attendance in the court-yard—that in which Colville had left Barebone.

"Here, in this cupboard," repeated Turner to unheeding ears. For Dormer Colville was already hurrying across the room toward the other window that looked out into the Rue Lafayette. The house was a lofty one, with a high entresol, and from the windows of the first floor it was not possible to see the street immediately below without opening the sashes.

Turner closed the cupboard and locked it, without ceasing to watch Colville, who was struggling with the stiff fastening of the outer sash.

"Anything the matter?" inquired the banker, placidly. "Lost a dog?"

But Colville had at length wrenched open the window and was leaning out. The roar of the traffic drowned any answer he may have made. It was manifest that the loss of three precious minutes had made him too late. After a glance down into the street, he came back into the centre of the room and snatched up his hat from Turner's bare writing-table.

He hurried to the door, but turned again, with his back against it, to face his companion, with the eyes usually so affable and sympathetic, ablaze for once with rage.

"Damn you!" he cried. "Damn you!"

And the door banged on his heels as he hurried through the outer office.

Turner was left standing, a massive incarnation of bewilderment, in the middle of the room. He heard the outer door close with considerable emphasis. Then he sat down again, his eyebrows raised high on his round forehead, and gazed sadly at the date-card.

* * * * * *

Colville had left Loo Barebone seated in the hired carriage in a frame of mind far from satisfactory. A seafaring life, more than any other, teaches a man quickness in

action. A hundred times a day the sailor needs to execute, with a rapidity impossible to the landsman, that which knowledge tells him to be the imminent necessity of the moment. At sea, life is so far simpler than in towns that there are only two ways: the right and the wrong. In the devious paths of a pavement-ridden man there are a hundred byways: there is the long, long lane of many turnings called Compromise.

Loo Barebone had turned into this lane one night at the Hotel Gemosac, in the Ruelle St. Jacob, and had wandered there ever since. Captain Clubbe had taught him the two ways of seamanship effectively enough. But the education fell short of the necessities of this crisis. Moreover, Barebone had in his veins blood of a race which had fallen to low estate through Compromise and Delay.

Let those throw the first stone at him who have seen the right way gaping before their feet with a hundred pitfalls and barriers, apparently insurmountable, and have resolutely taken that road. For the devious path of Compromise has this merit—that the obstacles are round the corner.

Barebone, absorbed in thought, hardly noticed that the driver of his carriage descended from the box and lounged toward the archway, where the hum of traffic and the passage of many people would serve to beguile a long wait. After a minute's delay, a driver returned and climbed to the seat—but it was not the same driver. He wore the same coat and hat, but a different face looked out from the sheepskin collar turned up to the ears. There was no one in the court-yard to notice this trifling change. Barebone was not even looking out of the window. He had never glanced at the cabman's face, whose vehicle had happened to be lingering at the corner of the Ruelle St. Jacob when Colville and his

companion had emerged from the high doorway of the Hotel Gemosac.

Barebone was so far obeying instructions that he was leaning back in the carriage, his face half hidden by the collar of his coat. For it was a cold morning in mid-winter. He hardly looked up when the handle of the door was turned. Colville had shut this door five minutes earlier, promising to return immediately. It was undoubtedly his hand that opened the door. But suddenly Barebone sat up. Both doors were open.

Before he could make another movement, two men stepped quietly into the carriage, each closing the door by which he had entered quickly and noiselessly. One seated himself beside Barebone, the other opposite to him, and each drew down a blind. They seemed to have rehearsed the actions over and over again, so that there was no hitch or noise or bungling. The whole was executed as if by clock-work, and the carriage moved away the instant the doors were closed.

In the twilight, within the carriage, the two men grasped Loo Barebone, each by one arm, and held him firmly against the back of the carriage.

"Quietly, *mon bon monsieur;* quietly, and you will come to no harm."

Barebone made no resistance, and only laughed.

"You have come too soon," he said, without attempting to free his arms, which were held, as if by a vice, at the elbow and shoulder. "You have come too soon, gentlemen! There is no money in the carriage. Not so much as a sou."

"It is not for money that we have come," replied the man who had first spoken—and the absolute silence of his companion was obviously the silence of a subordinate. "Though, for a larger sum than monsieur is likely to offer,

one might make a mistake, and allow of escape—who knows ? "

The remark was made with the cynical honesty of dishonesty which had so lately been introduced into France by him who was now Dictator of that facile people.

" Oh ! I offer nothing," replied Barebone. " For a good reason. I have nothing to offer. If you are not thieves, what are you ? "

The carriage was rattling along the Rue Lafayette, over the cobble-stones, and the inmates, though their faces were close together, had to shout in order to be heard.

" Of the police," was the reply. " Of the high police. I fancy that monsieur's affair is political ? "

" Why should you fancy that ? "

" Because my comrade and I are not engaged on other cases. The criminal receives very different treatment. Permit me to assure you of that. And no consideration whatever. The common police is so unmannerly. There !—one may well release the arms—since we understand each other."

" I shall not try to escape—if that is what you mean," replied Barebone, with a laugh.

" Nothing else—nothing else," his affable captor assured him.

And for the remainder of a long drive through the noisy streets the three men sat upright in the dim and musty cab in silence.

CHAPTER XXV

SANS RANCUNE

A LARGE French fishing-lugger was drifting northward on the ebb tide with its sails flapping idly against the spars. It had been a fine morning, and the Captain, a man from Fécamp, where every boy that is born is born a sailor, had been fortunate in working his way in clear weather across the banks that lie northward of the Thames.

He had predicted all along in a voice rendered husky by much shouting in dirty weather that the fog-banks would be drifting in from the sea before nightfall. And now he had that mournful satisfaction which is the special privilege of the pessimistic. These fog-banks, the pest of the east coast, are the materials that form the light fleecy clouds which drift westward in sunny weather like a gauze veil across the face of the sky. They roll across the North Sea from their home in the marshes of Holland on the face of the waters, and the mariner, groping his way with dripping eyelashes and a rosy face through them, can look up and see the blue sky through the rifts overhead. When the fog-bank touches land it rises, slowly lifted by the warm breath of the field.

On the coast-line it lies low; a mile inland it begins to break into rifts, so that any one working his way down one of the tidal rivers, sails in the counting of twenty seconds from sunshine into a pearly shadow. Five miles inland there is a transparent veil across the blue sky slowly sweeping

toward the west, and rising all the while, until those who dwell on the higher lands of Essex and Suffolk perceive nothing but a few fleecy clouds high in the heavens.

The lugger was hardly moving, for the tide had only turned half an hour ago.

"Provided," the Captain had muttered within the folds of his woollen scarf rolled round and round his neck until it looked like a dusky life-belt—"provided that they are ringing their bell on the Shipwash, we shall find our way into the open. Always sea-sick, this traveller, always sea-sick!"

And he turned with a kindly laugh to Loo Barebone, who was lying on a heap of old sails by the stern rail, concealing as well as he could the pangs of a consuming hunger.

"One sees that you will never be a sailor," added the man from Fécamp, with that rough humour which sailors use.

"Perhaps I do not want to be one," replied Barebone, with a ready gaiety which had already made him several friends on this tarry vessel, although the voyage had lasted but four days.

"Listen," interrupted the Captain, holding up a mittened hand. "Listen! I hear a bell, or else it is my conscience."

Barebone had heard it for some time. It was the bell-buoy at the mouth of Harwich River. But he did not deem it necessary for one who was a prisoner on board, and no sailor, to interfere in the navigation of a vessel now making its way to the Faröe fisheries for the twentieth time.

"My conscience," he observed, "rings louder than that."

The Captain took a turn round the tiller with a rope made fast to the rail for the purpose, and went to the side of the ship, lifting his nose toward the west.

"It is the land," he said. "I can smell it. But it is only the Blessed Virgin who knows where we are."

He turned and gave a gruff order to a man half hidden in the mist in the waist of the boat to try a heave of the lead.

The sound of the bell could be heard clearly enough now —the uncertain, hesitating clang of a bell-buoy rocked in the tideway—with its melancholy note of warning. Indeed, there are few sounds on sea or land more fraught with lonesomeness and fear. Behind it and beyond it a faint "tap-tap" was now audible. Barebone knew it to be the sound of a caulker's hammer in the Government repairing yard on the south side. They were drifting past the mouth of the Harwich River.

The leadsman called out a depth which Loo could have told without the help of line or lead. For he had served a long apprenticeship on these coasts under a captain second to none in the North Sea.

He turned a little on his bed of sails under repair, at which the Captain had been plying his needle while the weather remained clear, and glanced over his shoulder toward the ship's dinghy towing astern. The rope that held it was made fast round the rail a few feet away from him. The boat itself was clumsy, shaped like a walnut, of a preposterous strength and weight. It was fitted with a short, stiff mast and a balance lug-sail. It floated more lightly on the water than the bigger vessel, which was laden with coal and provender and salt for the North Atlantic fishery, and the painter hung loose, while the dinghy, tide-borne, sidled up to stern of its big companion like a kitten following its mother with the uncertain steps of infancy.

The face of the water was glassy and of a yellow green. Although the scud swept in toward the land at a fair speed,

there was not enough wind to fill the sails. Moreover, the bounty of Holland seemed inexhaustible. There was more to come. This fog-bank lay on the water halfway across the North Sea, and the brief winter sun having failed to disperse it, was now sinking to the west, cold and pale.

"The water seems shallow," said Barebone to the Captain. "What would you do if the ship went aground?"

"We should stay there, *mon bon monsieur*, until some one came to help us at the flood tide. We should shout until they heard us."

"You might fire a gun," suggested Barebone.

"We have no gun on board, mon bon monsieur," replied the Captain, who had long ago explained to his prisoner that there was no ill-feeling.

"It is the fortune of war," he had explained before the white cliffs of St. Valérie had faded from sight. "I am a poor man who cannot afford to refuse a good offer. It is a Government job, as you no doubt know without my telling you. You would seem to have incurred the displeasure or the distrust of some one high placed in the Government. 'Treat him well,' they said to me. 'Give him your best, and see that he comes to no harm unless he tries to escape. And be careful that he does not return to France before the mackerel fishing begins.' And when we do return to Fécamp, I have to lie to off Notre Dame de la Garde and signal to the Douane that I have you safe. They want you out of the way. You are a dangerous man, it seems. *Salut!*"

And the Captain raised his glass to one so distinguished by Government. He laughed as he set his glass down on the little cabin table.

"No ill-feeling on either side," he added. "*C'est entendu.*"

He made a half-movement as if to shake hands across the table and thought better of it, remembering, perhaps, that his own palm was not innocent of blood-money. For the rest they had been friendly enough on the voyage. And had the "Petite Jeanne" been in danger, it is probable that Barebone would have warned his jailer, if only in obedience to a seaman's instinct against throwing away a good ship.

He had noted every detail, however, of the dinghy while he lay on the deck of the "Petite Jeanne"; how the runner fitted to the mast; whether the halliards were likely to run sweetly through the sheaves or were knotted and would jamb. He knew the weight of the gaff and the great tan-soddened sail to a nicety. Some dark night, he had thought, on the Dogger, he would slip overboard and take his chance. He had never looked for thick weather at this time of year off the Banks, so near home, within a few hours' sail of the mouth of Farlingford River.

If a breeze would only come up from the south-east, as it almost always does in these waters toward the evening of a still, fine day! Without lifting his head he scanned the weather, noting that the scud was blowing more northward now. It might only be what is known as a slant. On the other hand, it might prove to be a true breeze, coming from the usual quarter. The "tap-tap" of the caulker's hammer on the slip-way in Harwich River was silent now. There must be a breeze in-shore that carried the sound away.

The topsail of the "Petite Jeanne" filled with a jerk, and the Captain, standing at the tiller, looked up at it. The lower sails soon took their cue, and suddenly the slack sheets hummed taut in the breeze. The "Petite Jeanne" answered to it at once, and the waves gurgled and laughed beneath her counter as she moved through the water. She could sail quicker than her dinghy: Barebone knew that. But he also

knew that he could handle an open boat as few even on the Côtes-du-Nord knew how.

If the breeze came strong, it would blow the fog-bank away, and Barebone had need of its covert. Though there must be many English boats within sight should the fog lift—indeed, the guardship in Harwich harbour would be almost visible across the spit of land where Landguard Fort lies hidden—Barebone had no intention of asking help so compromising. He had but a queer story to tell to any in authority, and on the face of it he must perforce appear to have run away with the dinghy of the "Petite Jeanne."

He desired to get ashore as unobtrusively as possible. For he was not going to stay in England. The die was cast now. Where Dormer Colville's persuasions had failed, where the memory of that journey through Royalist France had yet left him doubting, the incidents of the last few days had clinched the matter once for all. Barebone was going back to France.

He moved as if to stretch his limbs and lay down once more, with his shoulders against the rail and his elbow covering the stanchion round which the dinghy's painter was made fast.

The proper place for the dinghy was on deck should the breeze freshen. Barebone knew that as well as the French Captain of the "Petite Jeanne." For seamanship is like music—it is independent of language or race. There is only one right way and one wrong way at sea, all the world over. The dinghy was only towing behind while the fog continued to be impenetrable. At any moment the Captain might give the order to bring it inboard.

At any moment Barebone might have to make a dash for the boat.

He watched the Captain, who continued to steer in

silence. To drift on the tide in a fog is a very different thing to sailing through it at ten miles an hour on a strong breeze, and the steersman had no thought to spare for anything but his sails. Two men were keeping the look-out in the bows. Another—the leadsman—was standing amidships peering over the side into the mist.

Still Barebone waited. Captain Clubbe had taught him that most difficult art—to select with patience and a perfect judgment the right moment. The "Petite Jeanne" was rustling through the glassy water northward toward Farlingford.

At a word from the Captain the man who had been heaving the lead came aft to the ship's bell and struck ten quick strokes. He waited and repeated the warning, but no one answered. They were alone in these shallow channels. Fortunately the man faced forward, as sailors always do by instinct, turning his back upon the Captain and Barebone.

The painter was cast off now and, under his elbow, Barebone was slowly hauling in. The dinghy was heavy and the "Petite Jeanne" was moving quickly through the water. Suddenly Barebone rose to his feet, hauled in hand over hand, and when the dinghy was near enough, leaped across two yards of water to her gunwale.

The Captain heard the thud of his feet on the thwart, and looking back over his shoulder saw and understood in a flash of thought. But even then he did not understand that Loo was aught else but a landsman half-recovered from seasickness. He understood it a minute later, however, when the brown sail ran up the mast and, holding the tiller between his knees, Barebone hauled in the sheet hand over hand and steered a course out to sea.

He looked back over the foot of the sail and waved his hand.

"*Sans rancune!*" he shouted. "*C'est entendu!*" The Captain's own words.

The "Petite Jeanne" was already round to the wind, and the Captain was bellowing to his crew to trim the sails. It could scarcely be a chase, for the huge deep-sea fishing-boat could sail half as fast again as her own dinghy. The Captain gave his instructions with all the quickness of his race, and the men were not slow to carry them out. The safe-keeping of the prisoner had been made of personal advantage to each member of the crew.

The Captain hailed Barebone with winged words which need not be set down here, and explained to him the impossibility of escape.

"How can you—a landsman," he shouted, "hope to get away from us? Come back and it shall be as you say, '*sans rancune.*' Name of God! I bear you no ill-will for making the attempt."

They were so close together that all on board the "Petite Jeanne" could see Barebone laugh and shake his head. He knew that there was no gun on board the fishing-boat. The lugger rushed on, sailing quicker, lying up closer to the wind. She was within twenty yards of the little boat now—would overhaul her in a minute.

But in an instant Barebone was round on the other tack, and the Captain swore aloud, for he knew now that he was not dealing with a landsman. The "Petite Jeanne" spun round almost as quickly, but not quite. Every time that Barebone put about, the "Petite Jeanne" must perforce do the same, and every time she lost a little in the manœuvre. On a long tack or running before the wind the bigger boat was immeasurably superior. Barebone had but one chance—to make short tacks—and he knew it. The Captain knew it also, and no landsman would have possessed the knowledge. He was trying to run the boat down now.

Barebone might succeed in getting far enough away to

be lost in the fog. But in tacking so frequently he was liable to make a mistake. The bigger boat was not so likely to miss stays. He passed so close to her that he could read the figures cut on her stern-post indicating her draught of water.

There was another chance. The "Petite Jeanne" was drawing six feet; the dinghy could sail across a shoal covered by eighteen inches of water. But such a shoal would be clearly visible on the surface of the water. Besides, there was no shallow like that nearer than the Goodwins. Barebone pressed out seaward. He knew every channel and every bank between the Thames and Thorpeness. He kept on pressing out to sea by short tacks. All the while he was peeping over the gunwale out of the corner of his eye. He was near, he must be near, a bank covered by five feet of water at low tide. A shoal of five feet is rarely visible on the surface.

Suddenly he rose from his seat on the gunwale, and stood with the tiller in one hand and the sheet in the other, half turning back to look at "Petite Jeanne" towering almost over him. And as he looked, her bluff black bows rose upward with an odd climbing movement like a horse stepping up a bank. With a rattle of ropes and blocks she stood still.

Barebone went about again and sailed past her.

"*Sans rancune!*" he shouted. But no one heeded him, for they had other matters to attend to. And the dinghy sailed into the veil of the mist toward the land.

CHAPTER XXVI

RETURNED EMPTY

The breeze freshened, and, as was to be expected, blew the fog-bank away before sunset.

Sep Marvin had been an unwilling student all day. Like many of his cloth and generation, Parson Marvin pinned all his faith on education. "Give a boy a good education," he said, a hundred times. "Make a gentleman of him, and you have done your duty by him."

"Make a gentleman of him—and the world will be glad to feed and clothe him," was the real thought in his mind, as it was in the mind of nearly all his contemporaries. The wildest dreamer of those days never anticipated that, in the passage of one brief generation, social advancement should be for the shrewdly ignorant rather than for the scholar: that it would be better for a man that his mind be stored with knowledge of the world than the wisdom of the classics: that the successful grocer might find a kinder welcome in a palace than the scholar: that the manufacturer of kitchen utensils might feed with kings and speak to them, without aspirates, between the courses.

Parson Marvin knew none of these things, however; nor suspected that the advance of civilisation is not always progressive, but that she may take hands with vulgarity and dance down-hill, as she does to-day. His one scheme of life for Sep was that he should be sent to the ancient school

where field-sports are cultivated to-day and English gentlemen turned upon the world more ignorant than any other gentlemen in the universe. Then, of course, Sep must go to that College with which his father's life had been so closely allied. And if it please God to call him to the Church, and the College should remember that it had given his father a living, and do the same by him—for that reason and no other—then, of course, Sep would be a made man.

And the making of Sep had been in progress during the winter day that a fog-bank came in from the North Sea and clung tenaciously to the low, surfless coast. In the afternoon the sun broke through at last, wintry and pale. Sep, who, by some instinct—the instinct, it is to be supposed, of young animals—knew that he was destined to be of a generation that should cultivate ignorance out of doors, rather than learning by the fireside, threw aside his books and cried out that he could no longer breathe in his father's study.

So Parson Marvin went off, alone, to visit a distant parishioner—one who was dying by himself out on the marsh, in a cottage cut off from all the world in a spring tide.

"Don't forget that it is high tide at five o'clock, and that there is no moon, and that the dykes will be full. You will never find your way across the marsh after dark," said Sep—the learned in tides and those practical affairs of nature, which were as a closed book to the scholar.

Parson Marvin vaguely acknowledged the warning and went away, leaving Sep to accompany Miriam on her daily errand to the simple shops in Farlingford, which would awake to life and business now that the sea-fog was gone. For the men of Farlingford, like nearly all seafarers, are timorous of bad weather on shore and sit indoors during its passage, while they treat storm and rain with a calm contempt at sea.

"Sail a-coming up the river, master," River Andrew said to Sep, who was awaiting Miriam in the village street, and he walked on, without further comment, spade on shoulder, toward the church-yard, where he spent a portion of his day, without apparent effect.

So, when Miriam had done her shopping, it was only natural that they should turn their footsteps toward the quay and the river-wall. Or was it fate? So often is the natural nothing but the inevitable in holiday garb.

"That is no Farlingford boat," said Sep, versed in river-side knowledge, so soon as he saw the balance-lug moving along the line of the river-wall, half a mile below the village.

They stood watching. Few coasters were at sea in these months of wild weather, and there was nothing moving on the quay. The moss-grown slip-way, where "The Last Hope" had been drawn up for repair, stood gaunt and empty, half submerged by the flowing tide. Many Farlingford men were engaged in the winter fisheries on the Dogger, and farther north, in Lowestoft boats. In winter, Farlingford—thrust out into the North Sea, surrounded by marsh—is forgotten by the world.

The solitary boat came round the corner into the wider sheet of water, locally known as Quay Reach.

"A foreigner!" cried Sep, jumping, as was his wont, from one foot to the other with excitement. "It is like the boat that was brought up by the tide, with a dead man in it, long ago. And that was a Belgian boat."

Miriam was looking at the boat with a sudden brightness in her eyes, a rush of colour to her cheeks, which were round and healthy and of that soft clear pink which marks a face swept constantly by mist and a salty air. In flat countries, where men may see each other, unimpeded by hedge or tree or hillock, across a space measured only by miles, the eye is

soon trained—like the sailor's eye—to see and recognise at a great distance.

There was no mistaking the attitude of the solitary steersman of this foreign boat stealing quietly up to Farlingford on the flood tide. It was Loo Barebone sitting on the gunwale as he always sat, with one knee raised on the thwart, to support his elbow, and his chin in the palm of his hand, so that he could glance up the head of the sail or ahead, without needing to change his position.

Sep turned and looked up at her.

"I thought you said he was never coming back," he said, reproachfully.

"So I did. I thought he was never coming back."

Sep looked at her again, and then at the boat. One never knows how much children, and dogs—who live daily with human beings—understand.

"Your face is very red," he observed. "That comes from telling untruths."

"It comes from the cold wind," replied Miriam, with an odd, breathless laugh.

"If we do not go home, he will be there before us," said Sep, gravely. "He will make one tack across to the other side, and then make the mouth of the creek."

They turned and walked, side by side, on the top of the sea-wall toward the rectory. Their figures must have been outlined against the sky, for any watching from the river. The girl, tall and strong, walking with the ease that comes from health and a steadfast mind; the eager, restless boy running and jumping by her side. Barebone must have seen them as soon as they saw him. They were part of Farlingford, these two. He had a sudden feeling of having been away for years, with this difference—that he came back and found nothing changed. Whereas, in reality, he who

returns after a long absence usually finds no one awaiting him.

He did as Sep had foretold—crossing to the far side of the river, and then gaining the mouth of the creek in one tack. Miriam and Sep had reached the rectory garden first, and now stood waiting for him. He came on in silence. Last time—on "The Last Hope"—he had come up the river singing.

Sep waved his hand, and, in response, Barebone nodded his head, with one eye peering ahead, for the breeze was fresh.

The old chain was still there, imperfectly fastened round a tottering post at the foot of the tide-washed steps. It clinked as he made fast the boat. Miriam had not heard the sound of it since that night, long ago, when Loo had gone down the steps in the dark and cast off.

"I was given a passage home in a French fishing-boat, and borrowed their dinghy to come ashore in," said Loo, as he came up the steps. He knew that Farlingford would want some explanation, and that Sep would be proud to give it. An explanation is never the worse for a spice of truth.

"Miriam told me you were never coming home again," answered Sep, still nourishing that grievance.

"Well, she was wrong, and here I am!" was Loo's reply, with his old, ready laugh. "And here is Farlingford —unchanged, and no harm done."

"Why should there be any harm done?" was Sep's prompt question.

Barebone was shaking hands with Miriam.

"Oh, I don't know," he answered. "Because there always is harm done, I suppose."

Miriam was thinking that he had changed; that the man who had unmoored his boat at these steps six months ago had departed for ever, and that another had come back in his place. A minute later, as he turned to close the gate that shut off the rectory garden from the river-wall, chance ruled it that their eyes should meet for an instant, and she knew that he had not changed; that he might, perhaps, never change so long as he lived. She turned abruptly and led the way to the house.

Sep had a hundred questions to ask, but only a few of them were personal. Children live in a world of their own, and are not slow to invite those whom they like to come into it, while to the others, they shut the door with a greater frankness than is permissible later in life.

"Father," he explained, "has gone to see old Doy, who is dying."

"Is he still dying? He will never die, I am sure; for he has been trying to do it ever since I remember," laughed Barebone; who was interested, it seemed, in Sep's affairs, and never noticed that Miriam was walking more quickly than they were.

"And I am rather anxious about him," continued Sep, with the gravity that comes of a realised responsibility. "He moons along, you know, with his mind far away, and he doesn't know the path across the marsh a bit. He is bound to lose his way, and it is getting dark. Suppose I shall have to go and look for him."

"With a lantern," suggested Loo, darkly, without looking toward Miriam.

"Oh, yes!" replied Sep, with delight. "With a lantern, of course. Nobody but a fool would go out on to the marshes after dark without a lantern. The weed on the water makes it the same as the grass, and that old woman

who was nearly drowned last winter, you know, she walked straight in, and thought it was dry land."

And Loo heard no more, for they were at the door; and Miriam, in the lighted hall, was waiting for them, with all the colour gone from her face.

"He is sure to be in in a few minutes," she said; for she had heard the end of their talk. She could scarcely have helped hearing Loo's weighty suggestion of a lantern, which had had the effect he must have anticipated. Sep was already hurriedly searching for matches. It would be difficult to dissuade him from his purpose. What boy would willingly give up the prospect of an adventure on the marsh alone, with a bull's-eye? Miriam tried, and tried in vain. She gained time, however, and was listening for Marvin's footstep on the gravel all the while.

Sep found the matches—and it chanced that there was a sufficiency of oil in his lantern. He lighted up and went away, leaving an abominable smell of untrimmed wick behind him.

It was tea-time, and, half a century ago, that meal was a matter of greater importance than it is to-day. A fire burned in the dining-room, glowing warmly on the mellow walls and gleaming furniture; but there was no lamp, nor need of one, in a room with large windows facing the sunset sky.

Miriam led the way into this room, and lifted the shining, old-fashioned kettle to the hob. She took a chair that stood near, and sat, with her shoulder turned toward him, looking into the fire.

"We will have tea as soon as they come in," she said, in that voice of camaraderie which speaks of a life-long friendship between a man and a woman—if such a friendship be possible. Is it?—who knows? "They will not be long, I

am sure. You will like tea, after having been so long abroad. It is one of the charms of coming home, or one of the alleviations. I don't know which. And now, tell me all that has happened since you went away—if you care to."

CHAPTER XXVII

OUT OF THE MOUTHS OF BABES

MIRIAM'S manner toward him was the same as it had always been so long as he could remember. He had once thought—indeed, he had made to her the accusation—that she was always conscious of the social gulf existing between them; that she always remembered that she was by birth and breeding a lady, whereas he was the son of an obscure Frenchman who was nothing but a clockmaker whose name could be read (and can to this day be deciphered) on a hundred timepieces in remote East Anglian farms.

Since his change of fortune he had, as all men who rise to a great height or sink to the depths will tell, noted a corresponding change in his friends. Even Captain Clubbe had altered, and the affection which peeped out at times almost against his puritanical will seemed to have suffered a chill. The men of Farlingford, and even those who had sailed in "The Last Hope" with him, seemed to hold him at a distance. They nodded to him with a brief, friendly smile, but were shy of shaking hands. The hand which they would have held out readily enough, had he needed assistance in misfortune, slunk hastily into a pocket. For he who climbs will lose more friends than the ne'er-do-well. Some may account this to human nature for righteousness and others quite the contrary: for jealousy, like love, lies hidden in unsuspected corners.

Juliette de Gemosac had been quite different to Loo since learning his story. Miriam alone remained unchanged. He had accused her of failing to rise superior to arbitrary social distinctions, and now, standing behind her in the fire-lit dining-room of the rectory, he retracted that accusation once and for all time in his own heart, though her justification came from a contrary direction to that from which it might have been expected.

Miriam alone remained a friend—and nothing else, he added, bitterly, in his own heart. And she seemed to assume that their friendship, begun in face of social distinctions, should never have to suffer from that burthen.

"I should like to hear," she repeated, seeing that he was silent, "all that has happened since you went away; all that you may care to tell me."

"My heritage, you mean?"

She moved in her seat but did not look round. She had laid aside her hat on coming into the house, and as she sat, leaning forward with her hands clasped together in her lap, gazing thoughtfully at the fire which glowed blue and white for the salt water that was in the drift-wood, her hair, loosened by the wind, half concealed her face.

"Yes," she answered, slowly.

"Do you know what it is—my heritage?" lapsing, as he often did when hurried by some pressing thought, into a colloquialism half French.

She shook her head, but made no audible reply.

"Do you suspect what it is?" he insisted.

"I may have suspected, perhaps," she admitted, after a pause.

"When? How long?"

She paused again. Quick and clever as he was, she was no less so. She weighed the question. Perhaps she found

no answer to it, for she turned toward the door that stood open and looked out into the hall. The light of the lamp there fell for a moment across her face.

"I think I hear them returning," she said.

"No," he retorted, "for I should hear them before you did. I was brought up at sea. Do not answer the question, however, if you would rather not. You ask what has happened since I went away. A great many things have happened which are of no importance. Such things always happen, do they not? But one night, when we were quarrelling, Dormer Colville mentioned your name. He was very much alarmed and very angry, so he perhaps spoke the truth—by accident. He said that you had always known that I might be the King of France. Many things happened, as I tell you, which are of no importance, and which I have already forgotten, but that I remember and always shall."

"I have always known," replied Miriam, "that Mr. Dormer Colville is a liar. It is written on his face, for those who care to read."

A woman at bay is rarely merciful.

"And I thought for an instant," pursued Loo, "that such a knowledge might have been in your mind that night, the last I was here, last summer, on the river-wall. I had a vague idea that it might have influenced in some way the reply you gave me then."

He had come a step nearer and was standing over her. She could hear his hurried breathing.

"Oh, no," she replied, in a calm voice full of friendliness. "You are quite wrong. The reason I gave you still holds good, and—and always will."

In the brief silence that followed this clear statement of affairs, they both heard the rattle of the iron gate by the sea-wall. Sep and his father were coming. Loo turned to look

toward the hall and the front door, dimly visible in the shadow of the porch. While he did so Miriam passed her hand quickly across her face. When Loo turned again and glanced down at her, her attitude was unchanged.

"Will you look at me and say that again?" he asked, slowly.

"Certainly," she replied. And she rose from her chair. She turned and faced him with the light of the hall-lamp full upon her. She was smiling and self-confident.

"I thought," he said, looking at her closely, "as I stood behind you, that there were tears in your eyes."

She went past him into the hall to meet Sep and his father, who were already on the threshold.

"It must have been the firelight," she said to Barebone as she passed him.

A minute later Septimus Marvin was shaking him by the hand with a vague and uncertain but kindly grasp.

"Sep came running to tell me that you were home again," he said, struggling out of his overcoat. "Yes—yes. Home again to the old place. And little changed, I can see. Little changed, my boy. *Tempora mutantur*, eh? and we *mutamur in illis*. But you are the same."

"Of course. Why should I change? It is too late to change for the better now."

"Never! Never say that. But we do not want you to change. We looked for you to come in a coach-and-four—did we not, Miriam? For I suppose you have secured your heritage, since you are here again. It is a great thing to possess riches—and a great responsibility. Come, let us have tea and not think of such things. Yes—yes. Let us forget that such a thing as a heritage ever came between us—eh, Miriam?"

And with a gesture of old-world politeness he stood aside

for his niece to pass first into the dining-room, whither a servant had preceded them with a lamp.

"It will not be hard to do that," replied Miriam, steadily, "because he tells me that he has not yet secured it."

"All in good time—all in good time," said Marvin, with that faith in some occult power, seemingly the Government and Providence working in conjunction, to which parsons and many women confide their worldly affairs and sit with folded hands.

He asked many questions which were easy enough to answer; for he had no worldly wisdom himself, and did not look for it in other people. And then he related his own adventure—the great incident of his life—his visit to Paris.

"A matter of business," he explained. "Some duplicates—one or two of my prints which I had decided to part with. Miriam also wished me to see into some small money matters of her own. Her guardian, John Turner, you may remember, resides in Paris. A schoolfellow of my own, by the way. But our ways diverged later in life. I found him unchanged—a kind heart—always a kind heart. He attempts to conceal it, as many do, under a flippant, almost a profane, manner of speech. *Brutum fulmen.* But I saw through it—I saw through it."

And the rector beamed on Loo through his spectacles with an innocent delight in a Christian charity which he mistook for cunning.

"You see," he went on, "we have spent a little money on the rectory. To-morrow you will see that we have made good the roof of the church. One could not ask the villagers to contribute, knowing that the children want boots and scarcely know the taste of jam. Yes, John Turner was very kind to me. He found me a buyer for one of my prints."

The rector broke off with a sharp sigh and drank his tea.

"We shall never miss it," he added, with the hopefulness of those who can blind themselves to facts. "Come, tell me your impressions of France."

"I have been there before," replied Loo, with a curtness so unusual as to make Miriam glance at him. "I have been there before, you know. It would be more interesting to hear your own impressions, which must be fresher."

Miriam knew that he did not want to speak of France, and wondered why. But Marvin, eager to talk of his favourite study, seized the suggestion in all innocence. He had gone to Paris as he had wandered through life, with the mind of a child, eager, receptive, open to impression. Such minds pass by much that is of value, but to one or two conclusions they bring a perceptive comprehension which is photographic in its accuracy.

"I have followed her history with unflagging interest since boyhood," he said, "but never until now have I understood France. I walked through the streets of Paris and I looked into the faces of the people, and I realised that the astonishing history of France is true. One can see it in those faces. The city is brilliant, beautiful, unreal. The reality is in the faces of the people. Do you remember what Wellington said of them half a century ago? 'They are ripe,' he said, 'for another Napoleon.' But he could not see that Napoleon on the political horizon. And that is what I saw in their faces. They are ripe for something—they know not what."

"Did John Turner tell you that?" asked Loo, in an eager voice. "He who has lived in Paris all his life?"

And Miriam caught the thrill of excitement in the voice that put this question. She glanced at Loo. His eyes were

bright and his cheeks colourless. She knew that she was in the presence of some feeling that she did not understand. It was odd that an old scholar, knowing nothing but history, could thus stir a listener whose touch had hitherto only skimmed the surface of life.

"No," answered Marvin, with assurance. "I saw it myself in their faces. Ah! if another such as Napoleon could only arise—such as he, but different. Not an adventurer, but a King and the descendant of Kings—not allied, as Napoleon was, with a hundred other adventurers."

"Yes," said Loo, in a muffled voice, looking away toward the fire.

"A King whose wife should be a Queen," pursued the dreamer.

"Yes," said Loo again, encouragingly.

"They could save France," concluded Marvin, taking off his spectacles and polishing them with a silk handkerchief. Loo turned and looked at him, for the action so characteristic of a mere onlooker indicated that the momentary concentration of a mind so stored with knowledge that confusion reigned there was passing away.

"From what?" asked Loo. "Save France from what?"

"From inevitable disaster, my boy," replied Marvin, gravely. "That is what I saw in those gay streets."

Loo glanced at him sharply. He had himself seen the same all through those provinces which must take their cue from Paris whether they will or no.

"What a career!" murmured Marvin. "What a mission for a man to have in life—to save France! One does not like to think of the world without a France to lead it in nearly everything, or with a France, a mere ghost of her former self, exploited, depleted by another Bonaparte. And we

must look in vain for that man as did the good Duke years ago."

"I should like to have a shot at it," put in Sep, who had just despatched a large piece of cake.

"Heaven forbid!" exclaimed his father, only half in jest.

"Better sit all day under the lee of a boat and make nets, like Sea Andrew," advised Loo, with a laugh.

"Do you think so?" said Miriam, without looking up.

"All the same, I'd like to have a shot at it," persisted Sep. "Pass the cake, please."

Loo had risen and was looking at the clock. His face was drawn and tired and his eyes grave.

"You will come in and see us as often as you can while you are here?" said the kindly rector, as if vaguely conscious of a change in this visitor. "You will always find a welcome whether you come in a coach-and-four or on foot—you know that."

"Thank you—yes. I know that."

The rector peered at him through his spectacles.

"I hope," he said, "that you will soon be successful in getting your own. You are worried about it, I fear. The responsibilities of wealth, perhaps. And yet many rich people are able to do good in the world, and must therefore be happy."

"I do not suppose I shall ever be rich," said Loo, with a careless laugh.

"No, perhaps not. But let us hope that all will be for the best. You must not attach too much importance to what I said about France, you know. I may be wrong. Let us hope I am. For I understand that your heritage is there."

"Yes," answered Loo, who was shaking hands with Sep and Miriam, "my heritage is there."

"And you will go back to France?" inquired Marvin, holding out his hand.

"Yes," was the reply, with a side glance in the direction of Miriam. "I shall go back to France."

CHAPTER XXVIII

BAREBONE'S PRICE

At Farlingford, forgotten of the world, events move slowly and men's minds assimilate change without shock. Old people look for death long before it arrives, so that when at last the great change comes it is effected quite calmly. There is no indecent haste, no scrambling to put a semblance of finish to the incomplete, as there is in the hurried death of cities. Young faces grow softly mellow without those lines and anxious crow's-feet that mar the features of the middle-aged, who, to earn their daily bread or to kill the tedium of their lives, find it necessary to dwell in streets.

"Loo's home again," men told each other at "The Black Sailor"; and the women, who discussed the matter in the village street, had little to add to this bare piece of news. There was nothing unusual about it. Indeed, it was customary for Farlingford men to come home again. They always returned, at last, from wide wanderings, which a limited conversational capacity seemed to deprive of all interest. Those that stayed at home learnt a few names, and that was all.

"Where are ye now from, Willum?" the newly returned sailor would be kindly asked, with the sideward jerk of the head.

"A'm now from Valparaiso."

And that was all that there was to be said about

Valparaiso and the experiences of this circumnavigator. Perhaps it was not considered good form to inquire further into that which was, after all, his own business. If you ask an East Anglian questions he will tell you nothing; if you do not inquire he will tell you less.

No one, therefore, asked Barebone any questions. More especially is it considered, in seafaring communities, impolite to make inquiry into your neighbour's misfortune. If a man have the ill luck to lose his ship, he may well go through the rest of his life without hearing the mention of her name. It was understood in Farlingford that Loo Barebone had resigned his post on "The Last Hope" in order to claim a heritage in France. He had returned home, and was living quietly at Maidens Grave Farm with Mrs. Clubbe. It was, therefore, to be presumed that he had failed in his quest. This was hardly a matter for surprise to such as had inherited from their forefathers a profound distrust in Frenchmen.

The brief February days followed each other with that monotony, marked by small events, that quickly lays the years aside. Loo lingered on, with a vague indecision in his mind which increased as the weeks passed by and the spell of the wide marsh-lands closed round his soul. He took up again those studies which the necessity of earning a living had interrupted years before, and Septimus Marvin, who had never left off seeking, opened new historical gardens to him and bade him come in and dig.

Nearly every morning Loo went to the rectory to look up an obscure reference or elucidate an uncertain period. Nearly every evening, after the rectory dinner, he returned the books he had borrowed, and lingered until past Sep's bedtime to discuss the day's reading. Septimus Marvin, with an enthusiasm which is the reward of the simple-hearted, led the way down the paths of history while Loo

and Miriam followed—the man with the quick perception of his race, the woman with that instinctive and untiring search for the human motive which can put heart into a printed page of history.

Many a whole lifetime has slipped away in such occupations; for history, already inexhaustible, grows in bulk day by day. Marvin was happier than he had ever been, for a great absorption is one of Heaven's kindest gifts.

For Barebone, France and his quest there, the Marquis de Gemosac, Dormer Colville, Juliette, lapsed into a sort of dream, while Farlingford remained a quiet reality. Loo had not written to Dormer Colville. Captain Clubbe was trading between Alexandria and Bristol. "The Last Hope" was not to be expected in England before April. To communicate with Colville would be to turn that past dream, not wholly pleasant, into a grim reality. Loo therefore put off from day to day the evil moment. By nature and by training he was a man of action. He tried to persuade himself that he was made for a scholar and would be happy to pass the rest of his days in the study of that history which had occupied Septimus Marvin's thoughts during a whole lifetime.

Perhaps he was right. He might have been happy enough to pass his days thus if life were unchanging; if Septimus Marvin should never age and never die; if Miriam should be always there, with her light touch on the deeper thoughts, her half-French way of understanding the unspoken, with her steady friendship which might change, some day, into something else. This was, of course, inconsistent. Love itself is the most inconsistent of all human dreams; for it would have some things change and others remain ever as they are. Whereas nothing stays unchanged for a single day: love, least of all. For it must go forward or back.

"See!" cried Septimus Marvin, one evening, laying his hand on the open book before him. "See how strong are racial things. Here are the Bourbons for ever shutting their eyes to the obvious, for ever putting off the evil moment, for ever temporising—from father to son, father to son; generation after generation. Finally we come to Louis XVI. Read his letters to the Comte d'Artois. They are the letters of a man who knows the truth in his own heart and will not admit it even to himself."

"Yes," admitted Loo. "Yes—you are right. It is racial, one must suppose."

And he glanced at Miriam, who did not meet his eyes but looked at the open page, with a smile on her lips half sad, wholly tolerant.

Next morning, Loo thought, he would write to Dormer Colville. But the following evening came, and he had not done so. He went, as usual, to the rectory, where the same kind welcome awaited him. Miriam knew that he had not written. Like him, she knew that an end of some sort must soon come. And the end came an hour later.

Some day, Barebone knew, Dormer Colville would arrive. Every morning he half looked for him on the sea-wall, between "The Black Sailor" and the rectory garden. Any evening, he was well aware, the smiling face might greet him in the lamp-lit drawing-room.

Sep had gone to bed earlier that night. The rector was reading aloud an endless collection of letters, from which the careful student could scarcely fail to gather side-lights on history. Both Miriam and Loo heard the clang of the iron gate on the sea-wall.

A minute or two later the old dog, who lived mysteriously in the back premises, barked, and presently the servant announced that a gentleman was desirous of speaking to the

rector. There were not many gentlemen within a day's walk of the rectory. Some one must have put up at "The Black Sailor." Theoretically, the rector was at the call of any of his parishioners at all moments; but in practice the people of Farlingford never sought his help.

"A gentleman," said Marvin, vaguely; "well, let him come in, Sarah."

Miriam and Barebone sat silently looking at the door. But the man who appeared there was not Dormer Colville. It was John Turner.

He evinced no surprise on seeing Barebone, but shook hands with him with a little nod of the head, which somehow indicated that they had business together.

He accepted the chair brought forward by Marvin and warmed his hands at the fire, in no hurry, it would appear, to state the reason for this unceremonious call. After all, Marvin was his oldest friend and Miriam his ward. Between old friends, explanations are often better omitted.

"It is many years," he said, at length, "since I heard their talk. They speak with their tongues and their teeth, but not their lips."

"And their throats," put in Marvin, eagerly. "That is because they are of Teuton descent. So different from the French, eh, Turner?"

Turner nodded a placid acquiescence. Then he turned, as far, it would appear, as the thickness of his neck allowed, toward Barebone.

"Saw in a French paper," he said, "that the 'Petite Jeanne' had put in to Lowestoft, to replace a dinghy lost at sea. So I put two and two together. It is my business putting two and two together, and making five of them when I can, but they generally make four. I thought I should find you here."

Loo made no answer. He had only seen John Turner once in his life—for a short hour, in a room full of people, at Royan. The banker stared straight in front of him for a few moments. Then he raised his sleepy little eyes directly to Miriam's face. He heaved a sigh, and fell to studying the burning logs again. And the colour slowly rose to Miriam's cheeks. The banker, it seemed, was about his business again, in one of those simple addition sums, which he sometimes solved correctly.

"To you," he said, after a moment's pause, with a glance in Loo's direction, "to you, it must appear that I am interfering in what is not my own business. You are wrong there."

He had clasped his hands across his abnormal waistcoat, and he half closed his eyes as he blinked at the fire.

"I am a sort of intermediary angel," he went on, "between private persons in France and their friends in England. Nothing to do with state affairs, you understand; at least, very little. Many persons in England have relations or property in France. French persons fall in love with people on this side of the Channel, and vice versa. And, sooner or later, all these persons, who are in trouble with their property or their affections, come to me, because money is invariably at the bottom of the trouble. Money is invariably at the bottom of all trouble. And I represent money."

He pursed up his lips and gazed somnolently at the fire.

"Ask anybody," he went on, dreamily, after a pause, "if that is not the bare truth. Ask Colville, ask Mrs. St. Pierre Lawrence, ask Miriam Liston, sitting here beside us, if I exaggerate the importance of—of myself."

"Every one," admitted Barebone, cheerfully, "knows that you occupy a great position in Paris."

Turner glanced at him and gave a thick chuckle in his throat.

"Thank you," he said. "Very decent of you. And that point being established, I will explain further, that I am not here of my own free will. I am only an agent. No man in his senses would come to Farlingford in mid-winter unless—" he broke off, with a sharp sigh, and glanced down at Miriam's slipper resting on the fender, "unless he was much younger than I am. I came because I was paid to do it. Came to make you a proposition."

"To make me a proposition?" inquired Loo, as the identity of Turner's hearers had become involved.

"Yes. And I should recommend you to give it your gravest consideration. It is one of the most foolish propositions, from the proposer's point of view, that I have ever had to make. I should blush to make it, if it were any use blushing, but no one sees blushes on my cheeks now. Do not decide in a hurry—sleep on it. I always sleep on a question."

He closed his eyes, and seemed about to compose himself to slumber then and there.

"I am no longer young," he admitted, after a pause, "and therefore propose to take one of the few alleviations allowed to advancing years and an increasing avoirdupois. I am going to give you some advice. There is only one thing worth having in this life, and that is happiness. Even the possibility of it is worth all other possibilities put together. If a man have a chance of grasping happiness—I mean a home and the wife he wants . . . . and all that—he is wise to throw all other chances to the wind. Such, for instance, as the chance of greatness, of fame or wealth, of gratified vanity or satisfied ambition."

He had spoken slowly, and at last he ceased speaking, as

if overcome by a growing drowsiness. A queer silence followed this singular man's words. Barebone had not resumed his seat. He was standing by the mantelpiece, as he often did, being quick and eager when interested, and not content to sit still and express himself calmly in words, but must needs emphasise his meaning by gestures and a hundred quick movements of the head.

"Go on," he said. "Let us have the proposition."

"And no more advice?"

Loo glanced at Miriam. He could see all three faces where he stood, but only by the light of the fire. Miriam was nearest to the hearth. He could see that her eyes were aglow—possibly with anger.

Barebone shrugged his shoulders.

"You are not an agent—you are an advocate," he said.

Turner raised his eyes with the patience of a slumbering animal that has been prodded.

"Yes," he said—"your advocate. There is one more chance I should advise any man to shun—to cast to the four winds, and hold on only to that tangible possibility of happiness in the present—it is the chance of enjoying, in some dim and distant future, the satisfaction of having, in a half-forgotten past, done one's duty. One's first duty is to secure, by all legitimate means, one's own happiness."

"What is the proposition?" interrupted Barebone, quickly; and Turner, beneath his heavy lids, had caught in the passing the glance from Miriam's eyes, for which possibly both he and Loo Barebone had been waiting.

"Fifty thousand pounds," replied the banker, bluntly, "in first-class English securities, in return for a written undertaking on your part to relinquish all claim to any heritage to which you may think yourself entitled in France,

You will need to give your word of honour never to set foot on French soil—and that is all."

"I never, until this moment," replied Barebone, "knew the value of my own pretensions."

"Yes," said Turner, quietly; "that is the obvious retort. And having made it, you can now give a few minutes' calm reflection to my proposition—say five minutes, until that clock strikes half-past nine—and then I am ready to answer any questions you may wish to ask."

Barebone laughed good-humouredly, and so far fell in with the suggestion that he leant his elbow on the corner of the mantelpiece, and looked at the clock.

CHAPTER XXIX

IN THE DARK

Had John Turner been able to see round the curve of his own vast cheeks he might have perceived the answer to his proposition lurking in a little contemptuous smile at the corner of Miriam's closed lips. Loo saw it there, and turned again to the contemplation of the clock on the mantelpiece which had already given a preliminary click.

Thus they waited until the minutes should elapse, and Turner, with a smile of simple pleasure at their ready acquiescence in his suggestion, probably reflected behind his vacuous face that silence rarely implies indecision.

When at last the clock struck, Loo turned to him with a laugh and a shake of the head as if the refusal were so self-evident that to put it into words were a work of supererogation.

"Who makes the offer?" he asked.

Turner smiled on him with visible approbation as upon a quick and worthy foe who fought a capable fight with weapons above the board.

"No matter—since you are disposed to refuse. The money is in my hands, as is the offer. Both are good. Both will hold good till to-morrow morning."

Septimus Marvin gave a little exclamation of approval. He had been sitting by the table looking from one to the

other over his spectacles with the eager smile of the listener who understands very little, and while wishing that he understood more, is eager to put in a word of approval or disapprobation on safe and general lines. It was quite obvious to John Turner, who had entered the room in ignorance on this point, that Marvin knew nothing of Barebone's heritage in France while Miriam knew all.

"There is one point," he said, "which is perhaps scarcely worth mentioning. The man who makes the offer is not only the most unscrupulous, but is likely to become one of the most powerful men in Eur—men I know. There is a reverse side to the medal. There always is a reverse side to the good things of this world. Should you refuse his ridiculously generous offer you will make an enemy for life—one who is nearing that point where men stop at nothing."

Turner glanced at Miriam again. Her clean-cut features had a stony stillness and her eyes looked obstinately at the clock. The banker moved in his chair as if suddenly conscious that it was time to go.

"Do not," he said to Barebone, "be misled or mislead yourself into a false estimate of the strength of your own case. The offer I make you does not in any way indicate that you are in a strong position. It merely shows the indolence of a man naturally open-handed, who would always rather pay than fight."

"Especially if the money is not his own."

"Yes," admitted Turner, stolidly, "that is so. Especially if the money is not his own. I dare say you know the weakness of your own case: others know it too. A portrait is not much to go on. Portraits are so easily copied; so easily changed."

He rose as he spoke and shook hands with Marvin.

Then he turned to Miriam, but he did not meet her glance. Last of all he shook hands with Barebone.

"Sleep on it," he said. "Nothing like sleeping on a question. I am staying at 'The Black Sailor.' See you to-morrow."

He had come, had transacted his business and gone, all in less than an hour, with an extraordinary leisureliness almost amounting to indolence. He had lounged into the house, and now he departed without haste or explanation. Never hurry, never explain, was the text upon which John Turner seemed to base the sleepy discourse of his life. For each of us is a living sermon to his fellows, and, it is to be feared, the majority are warnings.

Turner had dragged on his thick overcoat, not without Loo's assistance, and, with the collar turned up about his ears, he went out into the night, leaving the three persons whom he had found in the drawing-room standing in the hall looking at the door which he closed decisively behind him. "Seize your happiness while you can," he had urged. "If not——" and the decisive closing of a door on his departing heel said the rest.

The clocks struck ten. It was not worth while going back to the drawing-room. All Farlingford was abed in those days by nine o'clock. Barebone took his coat and prepared to follow Turner. Miriam was already lighting her bedroom candle. She bade the two men good night and went slowly upstairs. As she reached her own room she heard the front door closed behind Loo and the rattle of the chain under the uncertain fingers of Septimus Marvin. The sound of it was like the clink of that other chain by which Barebone had made fast his boat to the tottering post on the river-wall.

Miriam's room was at the front of the house, and its

square Georgian windows faced eastward across the river to the narrow spit of marsh-land and the open sea beyond it. A crescent of moon far gone on the wane, yellow and forlorn, was rising from the sea. An uncertain path of light lay across the face of the far-off tide-way--broken by a narrow strip of darkness and renewed again close at hand across the wide river almost to the sea-wall beneath the window. From this window no house could be seen by day—nothing but a vast expanse of water and land hardly less level and unbroken. No light was visible on sea or land now, nothing but the waning moon in a cold clear sky.

Miriam threw herself, all dressed, on her bed with the abandonment of one who is worn out by some great effort, and buried her face in the pillow.

Barebone's way lay to the left along the river-wall by the side of the creek. Turner had gone to the right, taking the path that led down the river to the old quay and the village. Whereas Barebone must turn his back on Farlingford to reach the farm which still crouches behind a shelter of twisted oaks and still bears the name of Maiden's Grave; though the name is now nothing but a word. For no one knows who the maiden was, or where her grave, or what brought her to it.

The crescent moon gave little light, but Loo knew his way beneath the stunted cedars and through the barricade of ilex drawn round the rectory on the northern side. His eyes, trained to darkness, saw the shadowy form of a man awaiting him beneath the cedars almost as soon as the door was closed.

He went toward him, perceiving with a sudden misgiving that it was not John Turner. A momentary silhouette against the northern sky showed that it was Colville, come at last.

"Quick—this way!" he whispered, and taking Barebone's arm he led him through the bushes. He halted in a little open space between the ilex and the river-wall, which is fifteen feet high at the meeting of the creek and the larger stream. "There are three men, who are not Farlingford men, on the outer side of the sea-wall below the rectory landing. Turner must have placed them there. I'll be even with him yet. There is a large fishing-smack lying at anchor inside the Ness—just across the marsh. It is the 'Petite Jeanne.' I found this out while you were in there. I could hear your voices."

"Could you hear what he said?"

"No," answered Colville, with a sudden return to his old manner, easy and sympathetic. "No—this is no time for joking, I can tell you that. You have had a narrow escape, I assure you, Barebone. That man, the Captain of the 'Petite Jeanne,' is well known. There are plenty of people in France who want to get quietly rid of some family encumbrance—a man in the way, you understand, a son too many, a husband too much, a stepson who will inherit—the world is full of superfluities. Well, the Captain of the 'Petite Jeanne' will take them a voyage for their health to the Iceland fisheries. They are so far and so remote—the Iceland fisheries. The climate is bad and accidents happen. And if the 'Petite Jeanne' returns short-handed, as she often does, the other boats do the same. It is only a question of a few entries in the custom-house books at Fécamp. Do you see?"

"Yes," admitted Barebone, thoughtfully. "I see."

"I suppose it suggested itself to you when you were on board, and that is why you took the first chance of escape."

"Well, hardly; but I escaped, so it does not matter."

"No," acquiesced Colville. "It doesn't matter. But

how are we to get out of this? They are waiting for us under the sea-wall. Is there a way across the marsh?"

"Yes—I know a way. But where do you want to go to-night?"

"Out of this," whispered Colville, eagerly. "Out of Farlingford and Suffolk before the morning if we can. I tell you there is a French gunboat at Harwich, and another in the North Sea. It may be chance and it may not. But I suspect there is a warrant out against you. And, failing that, there is the 'Petite Jeanne' hanging about waiting to kidnap you a second time. And Turner's at the bottom of it, damn him!"

Again Dormer Colville allowed a glimpse to appear of another man quite different from the easy, indolent man-of-the-world, the well-dressed adventurer of a day when adventure was mostly sought in drawing-rooms, when scented and curled dandies were made or marred by women. For a moment Colville was roused to anger and seemed capable of manly action. But in an instant the humour passed and he shrugged his shoulders and gave a short, indifferent laugh beneath his breath.

"Come," he said, "lead the way and I will follow. I have been out here since eight o'clock and it is deucedly cold. I followed Turner from Paris, for I knew he was on your scent. Once across the marsh we can talk without fear as we go along."

Barebone obeyed mechanically, leading the way through the bushes to the kitchen-garden and over an iron fencing on to the open marsh. This stretched inland for two miles without a hedge or other fence but the sunken dykes which intersected it across and across. Any knowing his way could save two miles on the longer way by the only road connecting Farlingford with the mainland and tapping

the great road that runs north and south a few miles inland.

There was no path, for few ever passed this way. By day, a solitary shepherd watched his flocks here. By night the marsh was deserted. Across some of the dykes a plank is thrown, the whereabouts of which is indicated by a post, waist-high, driven into the ground, easily enough seen by day, but hard to find after dark. Not all the dykes have a plank, and for the most part the marsh is divided into squares, each only connected at one point with its neighbour.

Barebone knew the way as well as any in Farlingford, and he struck out across the thick grass which crunched briskly under the foot, for it was coated with rime, and the icy wind blew in from the sea a freezing mist. Once or twice Barebone, having made a bee-line across from dyke to dyke, failed to strike the exact spot where the low post indicated a plank, and had to pause and stoop down so as to find its silhouette against the sky. When they reached a plank he tried its strength with one foot and then led the way across it, turning and waiting at the far end for Colville to follow. It was unnecessary to warn him against a slip, for the plank was no more than nine inches wide and shone white with rime. Each foot must be secure before its fellow was lifted.

Colville, always ready to fall in with a companion's humour, ever quick to understand the thoughts of others, respected his silence. Perhaps he was not far from guessing the cause of it.

Loo was surprised to find that Dormer Colville was less antipathetic than he had anticipated. For the last month, night and day, he had dreaded Colville's arrival, and now that he was here he was almost glad to see him; almost

glad to quit Farlingford. And his heart was hot with anger against Miriam.

Turner's offer had at all events been worth considering. Had he been alone when it was made he would certainly have considered it; he would have turned it this way and that. He would have liked to play with it as a cat plays with a mouse, knowing all the while that he must refuse in the end. Perhaps Turner had made the offer in Miriam's presence, expecting to find in her a powerful ally. It was only natural for him to think this. Ever since the beginning, men have assigned to women the rôle of the dissuader, the drag, the hinderer. It is always the woman, tradition tells us, who persuades the man to be a coward, to stay at home, to shirk a difficult or a dangerous duty.

As a matter of fact, Turner had made this mistake. He had always wondered why Miriam Liston elected to live at Farlingford when with her wealth and connections, both in England and France, she might live a gayer life elsewhere. There must, he reflected, be some reason for it.

When whosoever does anything slightly unconventional or leaves undone what custom and gossip make almost obligatory, a relation or a mere interfering neighbour is always at hand to wag her head and say there must be some reason for it. Which means, of course, one specific reason. And the worst of it is that she is nearly always right.

John Turner, laboriously putting two small numerals together, after his manner, had concluded that Loo Barebone was the reason. Even banking may, it seems, be carried on without the loss of all human weakness, especially if the banker be of middle age, unmarried, and deprived by an unromantic superfluity of adipose tissue of the possibility of living through a romance of his own. Turner had consented to countenance, if not actually to take part in, a nefarious

scheme, to rid France and the present government of one who might easily bring about its downfall, on certain conditions. Knowing quite well that Loo Barebone could take care of himself at sea, and was quite capable of effecting an escape if he desired it, he had put no obstacle in the way of the usual voyage to the Iceland fisheries. Since those days many governments in France have invented many new methods of disposing of a political foe. Dormer Colville was only anticipating events when he took away the character of the Captain of the "Petite Jeanne."

Turner had himself proposed this alternative method of securing Barebone's silence. He had even named the sum. He had seized the excellent opportunity of laying it before Barebone in the quiet intimacy of the rectory drawing-room with Miriam in the soft lamp-light beside him, with the scent of the violets at her breast mingling with the warm smell of the wood fire.

And Barebone had laughed at the offer.

CHAPTER XXX

IN THE FURROW AGAIN

Turner, stumbling along the road to "The Black Sailor," probably wondered why he had failed. It is to be presumed that he knew that the ally he had looked to for powerful aid had played him false at the crucial moment.

His misfortune is common to all men who presume to take anything for granted from a woman.

Barebone, stumbling along in the dark in another direction, was as angry with Miriam as she in her turn was angry with Turner. She was, Barebone reflected, so uncompromising. She saw her course so clearly, so unmistakably—as birds that fly in the night—and from that course nothing, it seemed, would move her. It was a question of temperament and not of principle. For, even half a century ago, high principles were beginning to go out of fashion in the upper strata of a society which in these days tolerates anything except cheating at games.

Barebone himself was of a different temperament. He liked to blind himself to the inevitable end, to temporise with the truth, whereas Miriam, with a sort of dogged courage essentially English, perceived the hard truth at once and clung to it, though it hurt. And all the while Barebone knew at the back of his heart that his life was not his own to shape. At the end, says an Italian motto, stands Destiny. Barebone wanted to make believe; he wanted to pretend

that his path lay down a flowery way, knowing all the while that he had a hill to climb and Destiny stood at the top.

Colville had come at the right time. It is the fate of some men to come at the right moment, just as it is the lot of others never to be there when they are wanted and their place is filled by a bystander and an opportunity is gone for ever. Which is always a serious matter, for God only gives one or two opportunities to each of us.

Colville had come with his ready sympathy, not expressed as the world expresses its sympathy, in words, but by a hundred little self-abnegations. He was always ready to act up to the principles of his companion for the moment or to act up to no principles at all should that companion be deficient. Moreover, he never took it upon himself to judge others, but extended to his neighbour a large tolerance, in return for which he seemed to ask nothing.

"I have a carriage," he said, when on a broader cart-track they could walk side by side, "waiting for me at the roadside inn at the junction of the two roads. The man brought me from Ipswich to the outskirts of Farlingford, and I sent him back to the high road to wait for me there, to put up and stay all night, if necessary."

Barebone was beginning to feel tired. The wind was abominably cold. He heard with satisfaction that Colville had as usual foreseen his wishes.

"I dogged Turner all the way from Paris, hardly letting him out of my sight," Colville explained, cheerily, when they at length reached the road. "It is easy enough to keep in touch with one so remarkably stout, for every one remembers him. What did he come to Farlingford for?"

"Apparently to try and buy me off."

"For Louis Bonaparte?"

"He did not say so."

"No," said Colville. "He would not say so. But it is pretty generally suspected that he is in that galley, and pulls an important oar in it, too. What did he offer you?"

"Fifty thousand pounds."

"Whew!" whistled Colville. He stopped short in the middle of the road. "Whew!" he repeated, thoughtfully, "fifty thousand pounds! Gad! They must be afraid of you. They must think that we are in a strong position. And what did you say, Barebone?"

"I refused."

"Why?"

Barebone paused, and after a moment's thought made no answer at all. He could not explain to Dormer Colville his reason for refusing.

"Outright?" inquired Colville, deep in thought.

"Yes."

Colville turned and glanced at him sideways, though it was too dark to see his face.

"I should have thought," he said, tentatively, after a while, "that it would have been wise to accept. A bird in the hand, you know—a damned big bird! And then afterwards you could see what turned up."

"You mean I could break my word later on," inquired Barebone, with that odd downrightness which at times surprised Colville and made him think of Captain Clubbe.

"Well, you know," he explained, with a tolerant laugh, "in politics it often turns out that a man's duty is to break his word—duty toward his party, and his country, and that sort of thing."

Which was plausible enough, as many eminent politicians seem to have found in these later times.

"I dare say it may be so," answered Barebone, "but I refused outright, and there is an end to it."

For now that he was brought face to face with the situation, shorn of side issues and set squarely before him, he envisaged it clearly enough. He did not want fifty thousand pounds. He had only wanted the money for a moment because the thought leapt into his mind that fifty thousand pounds meant Miriam. Then he saw that little contemptuous smile tilting the corner of her lips, and he had no use for a million.

If he could not have Miriam, he would be King of France. It is thus that history is made, for those who make it are only men. And Clio, that greatest of the daughters of Zeus, about whose feet cluster all the famous names of the makers of this world's story, has, after all, only had the reversion of the earth's great men. She has taken them after some forgotten woman of their own choosing has had the first refusal.

Thus it came about that the friendship so nearly severed one evening at the Hotel Gemosac, in Paris, was renewed after a few months; and Barebone felt assured once more that no one was so well disposed toward him as Dormer Colville.

There was no formal reconciliation, and neither deemed it necessary to refer to the past. Colville, it will be remembered, was an adept at that graceful tactfulness which is somewhat clumsily described by this tolerant generation as going on as if nothing had happened.

By the time that the waning moon was high enough in the eastern sky to shed an appreciable light upon their path, they reached the junction of the two roads and set off at a brisk pace southward toward Ipswich. So far as the eye could reach, the wide heath was deserted, and they talked at their ease.

"There is nothing for it but to wake up my driver and

make him take us back to Ipswich to-night. To-morrow morning we can take train to London and be there almost as soon as John Turner realises that you have given him the slip," said Colville, cheerily.

"And then?"

"And then back to France—where the sun shines, my friend, and the spring is already in the air. Think of that! It is so, at least, at Gemosac, for I heard from the Marquis before I quitted Paris. Your disappearance has nearly broken a heart or two down there, I can tell you. The old Marquis was in a great state of anxiety. I have never seen him so upset about anything, and Juliette did not seem to be able to offer him any consolation."

"Back to France?" echoed Barebone, not without a tone of relief, almost of exultation, in his voice. "Will it be possible to go back there, since we have to run away from Farlingford?"

"Safer there than here," replied Colville. "It may sound odd, but it is true. De Gemosac is one of the most powerful men in France—not intellectually, perhaps, but by reason of his great name—and they would not dare to touch a protégé or a guest of his. If you go back there now you must stay at Gemosac; they have put the château into a more habitable condition, and are ready to receive you."

He turned and glanced at Loo's face in the moonlight.

"There will be a difference, you understand. You will be a different person from what you were when last there," he went on, in a muffled voice.

"Yes, I understand," replied Barebone, gravely. Already the dream was taking shape—Colville's persuasive voice had awakened him to find that it was no dream, but a reality—and Farlingford was fading back into the land of shadows. It was only France, after all, that was real.

"That journey of ours," explained Colville, vaguely, "has made an extraordinary difference. The whole party is aroused and in deadly earnest now."

Barebone made no answer, and they walked on in meditative silence toward the roadside inn, which stood up against the southern sky a few hundred yards ahead.

"In fact," Colville added, after a silence, "the ball is at your feet, Barebone. There can be no looking back now."

And again Barebone made no answer. It was a tacit understanding, then.

For greater secrecy, Barebone walked on toward Ipswich alone, while Colville went into the inn to arouse his driver, whom he found slumbering in the wide chimney corner before a log fire. From Ipswich to London, and thus on to Newhaven, they journeyed pleasantly enough in company, for they were old companions of the road, and Colville's unruffled good humour made him an easy comrade for travel even in days when the idea of comfort reconciled with speed had not suggested itself to the mind of man.

Such, indeed, was his foresight that he had brought with him to London, and there left awaiting further need of it, that personal baggage which Loo had perforce left behind him at the Hotel Gemosac in Paris.

They made but a brief halt in London, where Colville admitted gaily that he had no desire to be seen.

"I might meet my tailor in Piccadilly," he said. "And there are others who may perhaps consider themselves aggrieved."

At Colville's club, where they dined, he met more than one friend.

"Hallo!" said one who had the ruddy countenance and bluff manners of a retired major. "Hallo! Who'd have

expected to see you here? I didn't know—I—thought—eh! dammy!"

And a hundred facetious questions gleamed from the major's eye.

"All right, my boy," answered Colville, cheerfully. "I am off to France to-morrow morning."

The Major shook his head wisely as if in approval of a course of conduct savouring of that prudence which is the better part of valour, glanced at Loo Barebone, and waited in vain for an invitation to take a vacant chair near at hand.

"Still in the south of France, I suppose?"

"Still in the south of France," replied Colville, turning to Barebone in a final way, which had the effect of dismissing this inquisitive idler.

While they were at dinner another came. He was a raw-boned Scotchman, who spoke in broken English when the waiter was absent and in perfect French when that servitor hovered near.

"I wish I could show my face in Paris," he said, frankly, "but I can't. Too much mixed up with Louis Philippe to find favour in the eyes of the Prince President."

"Why?" asked Colville. "What could you gain by showing in Paris a face which I am sure has the stamp of innocence all over it?"

The Scotchman laughed curtly.

"Gain?" he answered. "Gain? I don't say I would, but I think I might be able to turn an honest penny out of the approaching events."

"What events?"

"The Lord alone knows," replied the Scotchman, who had never set foot in his country, but had acquired elsewhere the prudent habit of never answering a question. "France

doesn't, I am sure of that. I am thinking there will be events, though, before long, Colville. Will there not, now?"

Colville looked at him with an open smile.

"You mean," he said, slowly, "the Prince President."

"That is what he calls himself at present. I'm wondering how long. Eh! man. He is just pouring money into the country from here, from America, from Austria—from wherever he can get it."

"Why is he doing that?"

"You must ask somebody who knows him better than I do. They say you knew him yourself once well enough, eh?"

"He is not a man I have much faith in," said Colville, vaguely. "And France has no faith in him at all."

"So I'm told. But France—well, does France know what she wants? She mostly wants something without knowing what it is. She is like a woman. It's excitement she wants, perhaps. And she will buy it at any cost, and then find afterward she has paid too dear for it. That is like a woman, too. But it isn't another Bonaparte she wants, I am sure of that."

"So am I," answered Colville, with a side glance toward Barebone, a mere flicker of the eyelids.

"Not unless it is a Napoleon of that ilk."

"And he is not," completed Colville.

"But—" the Scotchman paused, for a waiter came at this moment to tell him that his dinner was ready at a table nearer to the fire. "But," he went on, in French, for the waiter lingered, "but he might be able to persuade France that it is himself she wants—might he not, now? With money at the back of it, eh?"

"He might," admitted Colville, doubtfully.

The Scotchman moved away, but came back again.

"I am thinking," he said, with a grim smile, "that like all intelligent people who know France, you are aware that it is a King she wants."

"But not an Orleans King," replied Colville, with his friendly and indifferent laugh.

The Scotchman smiled more grimly still and went away.

He was seated too near for Colville and Loo to talk of him. But Colville took an opportunity to mention his name in an undertone. It was a name known all over Europe then, and forgotten now.

CHAPTER XXXI

THE THURSDAY OF MADAME DE CHANTONNAY

"It is," Madame de Chantonnay had maintained throughout the months of January and February—"it is an affair of the heart."

She continued to hold this opinion with, however, a shade less conviction, well into a cold March.

"It is an affair of the heart, Abbé," she said. "*Allez!* I know what I talk of. It is an affair of the heart and nothing more. There is some one in England: some blonde English girl. They are always washing, I am told. And certainly they have that air—like a garment that has been too often to the *blanchisseuse* and has lost its substance. A beautiful skin, I allow you. But so thin—so thin."

"The skin, madame?" inquired the Abbé Touvent, with that gentle and cackling humour in which the ordained of any Church may indulge after a good dinner.

The Abbé Touvent had, as a matter of fact, been Madame de Chantonnay's most patient listener through the months of suspense that followed Loo Barebone's sudden disappearance. Needless to say he agreed ardently with whatever explanation she put forward. Old ladies who give good dinners to a Low Church British curate, or an abbé of the Roman confession, or, indeed, to the needy celibate exponents of any creed whatsoever, may always count upon the active conversational support of their spiritual adviser. And it is

not only within the fold of Papacy that careful Christians find the road to heaven made smooth by the arts of an efficient cook.

"You know well enough what I mean, malicious one," retorted the lady, arranging her shawl upon her fat shoulders.

"I always think," murmured the Abbé, sipping his digestive glass of eau-de-vie d'Armagnac, which is better than any cognac of Charente—"I always think that to be thin shows a mean mind, lacking generosity."

"Take my word for it," pursued Madame de Chantonnay, warming to her subject, "that is the explanation of the young man's disappearance. They say the government has taken some underhand way of putting him aside. One does not give credence to such rumours in these orderly times. No: it is simply that he prefers the pale eyes of some Mees to glory and France. Has it not happened before, Abbé?"

"Ah! Madame—" another sip of Armagnac.

"And will it not happen again? It is the heart that has the first word and the last. I know—I who address you, I know!"

And she touched her breast where, very deeply seated it is to be presumed, she kept her own heart.

"Ah! Madame. Who better?" murmured the Abbé.

"Na, na!" exclaimed Madame de Chantonnay, holding up one hand, heavy with rings, while with the other she gathered her shawl closer about her as if for protection. "Now you tread on dangerous ground, wicked one—*wicked!* And you so demure in your soutane!"

But the Abbé only laughed and held up his small glass after the manner of any abandoned layman drinking a toast.

"Madame," he said, "I drink to the hearts you have

broken. And now I go to arrange the card tables, for your guests will soon be coming."

It was, in fact, Madame de Chantonnay's Thursday evening to which were bidden such friends as enjoyed for the moment her fickle good graces. The Abbé Touvent was, so to speak, a permanent subscriber to these favours. The task was easy enough, and any endowed with a patience to listen, a readiness to admire that excellent young nobleman, Albert de Chantonnay, and the credulity necessary to listen to the record (more hinted at than clearly spoken) of Madame's own charms in her youth, could make sure of a game of dominoes on the evening of the third Thursday in the month.

The Abbé bustled about, drawing cards and tables nearer to the lamps, away from the draught of the door, not too near the open wood fire. His movements were dainty, like those of an old maid of the last generation. He hissed through his teeth as if he were working very hard. It served to stimulate a healthy excitement in the Thursday evening of Madame de Chantonnay.

"Oh, I am not uneasy," said that lady, as she watched him. She had dined well and her digestion had outlived those charms to which she made such frequent reference. "I am not uneasy. He will return, more or less sheepish. He will make some excuse more or less inadequate. He will tell us a story more or less creditable. *Allez!* Oh, you men. If you intend that chair for Monsieur de Gemosac, it is the wrong one. Monsieur de Gemosac sits high, but his legs are short; give him the little chair that creaks. If he sits too high he is apt to see over the top of one's cards. And he is so eager to win—the good Marquis."

"Then he will come to-night despite the cold? You think he will come, Madame?"

"I am sure of it. He has come more frequently since Juliette came to live at the château. It is Juliette who makes him come, perhaps. Who knows?"

The Abbé stopped midway across the floor and set down the chair he carried with great caution.

"Madame is incorrigible," he said, spreading out his hands. "Madame would perceive a romance in a cradle."

"Well, one must begin somewhere, Materialist. Once it was for me that the guests crowded to my poor Thursdays. But now it is because Albert is near. Ah! I know it. I say it without jealousy. Have you noticed, my dear Abbé, that he has cut his whiskers a little shorter—a shade nearer to the ear? It is effective, eh?"

"It gives an air of hardihood," assented the Abbé. "It lends to that intellectual face something martial. I would almost say that to the timorous it might appear terrible and overbearing."

Thus they talked until the guests began to arrive, and for Madame de Chantonnay the time no doubt seemed short enough. For no one appreciated Albert with such a delicacy of touch as the Abbé Touvent.

The Marquis de Gemosac and Juliette were the last to arrive. The Marquis looked worn and considerably aged. He excused himself with a hundred gestures of despair for being late.

"I have so much to do," he whispered. "So much to think of. We are leaving no stone unturned, and at last we have a clue."

The other guests gathered round.

"But speak, my dear friend, speak," cried Madame de Chantonnay. "You keep us in suspense. Look around you. We are among friends, as you see. It is only ourselves."

"Well," replied the Marquis, standing upright and fingering the snuff-box which had been given to his grandfather by the Great Louis. "Well, my friends, our invaluable ally, Dormer Colville, has gone to England. There is a ray of hope. That is all I can tell you."

He looked round, smiled on his audience, and then proceeded to tell them more, after the manner of any Frenchman.

"What," he whispered, "if an unscrupulous republican government had got scent of our glorious discovery! What if, panic-stricken, they threw all vestige of honour to the wind and decided to kidnap an innocent man and send him to the Iceland fisheries, where so many lives are lost every winter; with what hopes in their republican hearts, I leave to your imagination. What if—let us say it for once—Monsieur de Bourbon should prove a match for them? Alert, hardy, full of resource, a skilled sailor, he takes his life in his hand with the daring audacity of royal blood and effects his escape to England. I tell you nothing——"

He held up his hands as if to stay their clamouring voices, and nodded his head triumphantly toward Albert de Chantonnay, who stood near a lamp fingering his martial whisker of the left side with the air of one who would pause at naught.

"I tell you nothing. But such a theory has been pieced together upon excellent material. It may be true. It may be a dream. And, as I tell you, our dear friend Dormer Colville, who has nothing at stake, who loses or gains little by the restoration of France, has journeyed to England for us. None could execute the commission so capably, or without danger of arousing suspicion. There! I have told you all I know. We must wait, my compatriots. We must wait."

"And in the mean time," purred the voice of the Abbé Touvent, "for the digestion, Monsieur le Marquis—for the digestion."

For it was one of the features of Madame de Chantonnay's Thursdays that no servants were allowed in the room; but the guests waited on each other. If the servants, as is to be presumed, listened outside the door, they were particular not to introduce each succeeding guest without first knocking, which caused a momentary silence and added considerably to the sense of political importance of those assembled. The Abbé Touvent made it his special care to preside over the table where small glasses of eau-de-vie d'Armagnac and other aids to digestion were set out in a careful profusion.

"It is a theory," my dear Marquis," admitted Madame de Chantonnay. "But it is nothing more. It has no heart in it, your theory. Now I have a theory of my own."

"Full of heart, one may assure oneself, Madame; full of heart," murmured the Marquis. "For you yourself are full of heart—is it not so?"

"I hope not," Juliette whispered to her fan, with a little smile of malicious amusement. For she had a youthful contempt for persons old and stout, who talk ignorantly of matters only understood by such as are young and slim and pretty. She looked at her fan with a gleam of ill-concealed irony and glanced over it toward Albert de Chantonnay, who, with a consideration which must have been hereditary, was uneasy about the alteration he had made in his whiskers. It was perhaps unfair, he felt, to harrow young and tender hearts.

It was at this moment that a loud knock commanded a breathless silence, for no more guests were expected. Indeed the whole neighbourhood was present.

The servant, in his faded gold lace, came in and announced with a dramatic assurance : " Monsieur de Borbone —Monsieur Colville."

And that difference which Dormer Colville had predicted was manifested with an astounding promptness ; for all who were seated rose to their feet. It was Colville who had given the names to the servant in the order in which they had been announced, and at the last minute, on the threshold, he had stepped on one side and with his hand on Barebone's shoulder had forced him to take precedence.

The first person Barebone saw on entering the room was Juliette, standing under the spreading arms of a chandelier, half turned to look at him—Juliette, in all the freshness of her girlhood and her first evening dress, flushing pink and white like a wild rose, her eyes, bright with a sudden excitement, seeking his.

Behind her, the Marquis de Gemosac, Albert de Chantonnay, his mother, and all the Royalists of the province, gathered in a semicircle, by accident or some tacit instinct, leaving only the girl standing out in front, beneath the chandelier. They bowed with that grave self-possession which falls like a cloak over the shoulders of such as are of ancient and historic lineage.

" We reached the château of Gemosac only a few minutes after Monsieur le Marquis and Mademoiselle had quitted it to come here," Barebone explained to Madame de Chantonnay ; " and trusting to the good-nature—so widely famed —of Madame la Comtesse, we hurriedly removed the dust of travel, and took the liberty of following them hither."

" You have not taken me by surprise," replied Madame de Chantonnay. " I expected you. Ask the Abbé Touvent. He will tell you, gentlemen, that I expected you."

As Barebone turned away to speak to the Marquis and

others, who were pressing forward to greet him, it became apparent that that mantle of imperturbability, which millions made in trade can never buy, had fallen upon his shoulders, too. For most men are, in the end, forced to play the part the world assigns to them. We are not allowed to remain what we know ourselves to be, but must, at last, be that which the world thinks us.

Madame de Chantonnay, murmuring to a neighbour a mystic reference to her heart and its voluminous premonitions, watched him depart with a vague surprise.

"*Mon Dieu! mon Dieu!*" she whispered, breathlessly. "It is not a resemblance. It is the dead come to life again."

CHAPTER XXXII

PRIMROSES

"If I go on, I go alone," Barebone had once said to Dormer Colville. The words, spoken in the heat of a quarrel, stuck in the memory of both, as such are wont to do. Perhaps, in moments of anger or disillusionment—when we find that neither self nor friend is what we thought—the heart tears itself away from the grip of the cooler, calmer brain and speaks untrammelled. And such speeches are apt to linger in the mind long after the most brilliant jeu d'esprit has been forgotten.

What occupies the thoughts of the old man, sitting out the grey remainder of the day, over the embers of a hearth which he will only quit when he quits the world? Does he remember the brilliant sallies of wit, the greatest triumphs of the noblest minds with which he has consorted; or does his memory cling to some scene—simple, pastoral, without incident—which passed before his eyes at a moment when his heart was sore or glad? When his mind is resting from its labours and the sound of the grinding is low, he will scarce remember the neat saying or the lofty thought clothed in perfect language; but he will never forget a hasty word spoken in an unguarded moment by one who was not clever at all, nor even possessed the worldly wisdom to shield the heart behind the buckler of the brain.

"You will find things changed," Colville had said, as

they walked across the marsh from Farlingford, toward the Ipswich road. And the words came back to the minds of both, on that Thursday of Madame de Chantonnay, which many remember to this day. Not only did they find things changed, but themselves they found no longer the same. Both remembered the quarrel, and the outcome of it.

Colville, ever tolerant, always leaning toward the compromise that eases a doubting conscience, had, it would almost seem unconsciously, prepared the way for a reconciliation before there was any question of a difference. On their way back to France, without directly referring to that fatal portrait and the revelation caused by Barebone's unaccountable feat of memory, he had smoothed away any possible scruple.

"France must always be deceived," he had said, a hundred times. "Better that she should be deceived for an honest than a dishonest purpose—if it is deception, after all, which is very doubtful. The best patriot is he who is ready to save his country at the cost of his own ease, whether of body or of mind. It does not matter who or what you are; it is what or who the world thinks you to be, that is of importance."

Which of us has not listened to a score of such arguments, not always from the lips of a friend, but most often in that still, small voice which rarely has the courage to stand out against the tendency of the age? There is nothing so contagious as laxity of conscience.

Barebone listened to the good-natured, sympathetic voice with a make-believe conviction which was part of his readiness to put off an evil moment. Colville was a difficult man to quarrel with. It seemed bearish and ill-natured to take amiss any word or action which could only be the outcome of a singularly tender consideration for the feelings of others.

But when they entered Madame de Chantonnay's drawing-room—when Dormer, impelled by some instinct of the fitness of things, stepped aside and motioned to his companion to pass in first—the secret they had in common yawned suddenly like a gulf between them. For the possession of a secret either estranges or draws together. More commonly, it estranges. For which of us is careful of a secret that redounds to our credit? Nearly every secret is a hidden disgrace; and such a possession, held in common with another, is not likely to insure affection.

Colville lingered on the threshold, watching Loo make the first steps of that progress which must henceforth be pursued alone. He looked round for a friendly face, but no one had eyes for him. They were all looking at Loo Barebone. Colville sought Mrs. St. Pierre Lawrence, usually in full evidence, even in a room full of beautiful women and distinguished men. But she was not there. For a minute or two no one noticed him; and then Albert de Chantonnay, remembering his rôle, came forward to greet the Englishman.

"It was," explained Colville, in a lowered voice, "as we thought. An attempt was made to get him out of the way, but he effected his escape. He knew, however, the danger of attempting to communicate with any of us by post, and was awaiting some opportunity of transmitting a letter by a safe hand, when I discovered his hiding-place."

And this was the story that went half round France, from lip to lip, among those who were faithful to the traditions of a glorious past.

"Madame St. Pierre Lawrence," Albert de Chantonnay told Colville, in reply, "is not here to-night. She is, however, at her villa, at Royan. She has not, perhaps, displayed such interest in our meetings as she did before you departed

on your long journey through France. But her generosity is unchanged. The money, which, in the hurry of the moment, you did not withdraw from her bank—— "

"I doubt whether it was ever there," interrupted Colville.

"She informs me," concluded Albert, "is still at our service. We have many other promises, which must now be recalled to the minds of those who made them. But from no one have we received such generous support as from your kinswoman."

They were standing apart, and in a few minutes the Marquis de Gemosac joined them.

"How daring! how audacious!" he whispered, "and yet how opportune—this return. It is all to be recommenced, my friends, with a firmer grasp, a new courage."

"But my task is accomplished," returned Colville. "You have no further use for a mere Englishman, like myself. I was fortunate in being able to lend some slight assistance in the original discovery of our friend; I have again been lucky enough to restore him to you. And now, with your permission, I will return to Royan, where I have my little apartment, as you know."

He looked from one to the other, with his melancholy and self-deprecating smile.

"*Voilà*," he added; "it remains for me to pay my respects to Madame de Chantonnay. We have travelled far, and I am tired. I shall ask her to excuse me."

"And Monsieur de Bourbon comes to Gemosac. That is understood. He will be safe there. His apartments have been in readiness for him these last two months. Hidden there, or in other dwellings—grander and better served, perhaps, than my poor ruin, but no safer—he can continue the great work he began so well last winter. As for you, my dear Colville," continued the Marquis, taking the

Englishman's two hands in his, "I envy you from the bottom of my heart. It is not given to many to serve France as you have served her—to serve a King as you have served one. It will be my business to see that both remember you. For France, I allow, sometimes forgets. Go to Royan, since you wish—but it is only for a time. You will be called to Paris some day, that I promise you."

The Marquis would have embraced him then and there, had the cool-blooded Englishman shown the smallest desire for that honour. But Dormer Colville's sad and doubting smile held at arms' length one who was always at the mercy of his own eloquence.

The card tables had lost their attraction; and, although many parties were formed, and the cards were dealt, the players fell to talking across the ungathered tricks, and even the Abbé Touvent was caught tripping in the matter of a point.

"Never," exclaimed Madame de Chantonnay, as her guests took leave at their wonted hour, and some of them even later—"never have I had a Thursday so dull and yet so full of incident."

"And never, madame," replied the Marquis, still on tip-toe, as it were, with delight and excitement, "shall we see another like it."

Loo went back to Gemosac with the fluttering old man and Juliette. Juliette, indeed, was in no flutter, but had carried herself through the excitement of her first evening party with a demure little air of self-possession.

She had scarce spoken to Loo during the evening. Indeed, it had been his duty to attend on Madame de Chantonnay and on the older members of these quiet Royalist families biding their time in the remote country villages of Guienne and the Vendée.

On the journey home, the Marquis had so much to tell his companion, and told it so hurriedly, that his was the only voice heard above the rattle of the heavy, old-fashioned carriage. But Barebone was aware of Juliette's presence in a dark corner of the roomy vehicle, and his eyes, seeking to penetrate the gloom, could just distinguish hers, which seemed to be turned in his direction.

Many changes had been effected at the château, and a suite of rooms had been prepared for Barebone in the detached building known as the Italian house, which stands in the midst of the garden within the enceinte of the château walls.

"I have been able," explained the Marquis, frankly, "to obtain a small advance on the results of last autumn's vintage. My notary in the village found, indeed, that facilities were greater than he had anticipated. With this sum, I have been enabled to effect some necessary repairs to the buildings and the internal decorations. I had fallen behind the times, perhaps. But now that Juliette is installed as châtelaine, many changes have been effected. You will see, my dear friend; you will see for yourself. Yes, for the moment, I am no longer a pauper. As you yourself will have noticed, in your journey through the west, rural France is enjoying a sudden return of prosperity. It is unaccountable. No one can make me believe that it is to be ascribed to this scandalous Government, under which we agonise. But there it is—and we must thank Heaven for it."

Which was only the truth. For France was at this time entering upon a period of plenty. The air was full of rumours of new railways, new roads, and new commercial enterprise. Banks were being opened in the provincial towns, and loans made on easy terms to agriculturists for the improvement of their land.

Barebone found that there were indeed changes in the

old château. The apartments above that which had once been the stabling, hitherto occupied by the Marquis, had been added to and a slight attempt at redecoration had been made. There was no lack of rooms, and Juliette now had her own suite, while the Marquis lived, as hitherto, in three small apartments over the rooms occupied by Marie and her husband.

An elderly relation—one of those old ladies habited in black, who are ready to efface themselves all day and occupy a garret all night in return for bed and board, had been added to the family. She contributed a silent and mysterious presence, some worldly wisdom, and a profound respect for her noble kinsman.

"She is quite harmless," Juliette explained, gaily, to Barebone, on the first occasion when they were alone together. This did not present itself until Loo had been quartered in the Italian house for some days, with his own servant. Although he took luncheon and dinner with the family in the old building near to the gate-house, and spent his evenings in Juliette's drawing-room, the Marquis or Madame Maugiron was always present, and as often as not, they played a game of chess together.

"She is quite harmless," said Juliette, tying, with a thread, the primroses she had been picking in that shady corner of the garden which lay at the other side of the Italian house. The windows of Barebone's apartment, by the way, looked down upon this garden, and he, having perceived her, had not wasted time in joining her in the morning sunshine.

"I wonder if I shall be as harmless when I am her age."

And, indeed, danger lurked beneath her lashes as she glanced at him, asking this question with her lips and a hundred others with her eyes, with her gay air of youth and

happiness—with her very attitude of coquetry, as she stood in the spring sunshine, with the scent of the primroses about her.

"I think that any one who approaches you will always do so at his peril, Mademoiselle."

"Then why do it?" she asked, drawing back and busying herself with the flowers, which she laid against her breast, as if to judge the effect of their colour against the delicate white of her dress. "Why run into danger? Why come downstairs at all?"

"Why breathe?" he retorted, with a laugh. "Why eat, or drink, or sleep? Why live? *Mon Dieu!* because there is no choice. And when I see you in the garden, there is no choice for me, Mademoiselle. I must come down and run into danger, because I cannot help it any more than I can help—— "

"But you need not stay," she interrupted, cleverly. "A brave man may always retire from danger into safety."

"But he may not always want to, Mademoiselle."

"Ah!"

And, with a shrug of the shoulders, she inserted the primroses within a very small waistband and turned away.

"Will you give me those primroses, Mademoiselle?" asked Loo, without moving; for, although she had turned to go, she had not gone.

She turned on her heel and looked at him, with demure surprise, and then bent her head to look at the flowers at her own waist.

"They are mine," she answered, standing in that pretty attitude, her hair half concealing her face. "I picked them myself."

"Two reasons why I want them."

"Ah! but," she said, with a suggestion of thoughtful-

ness, "one does not always get what one wants. You ask a great deal, Monsieur."

"There is no limit to what I would ask, Mademoiselle."

She laughed gaily.

"If—" she inquired, with raised eyebrows.

"If I dared."

Again she looked at him with that little air of surprise.

"But I thought you were so brave?" she said. "So reckless of danger? A brave man assuredly does not ask. He takes that which he would have."

It happened that she had clasped her hands behind her back, leaving the primroses at her waist uncovered and half falling from the ribbon.

In a moment he had reached out his hand and taken them. She leapt back, as if she feared that he might take more, and ran back toward the house, placing a rough tangle of brier between herself and this robber. Her laughing face looked at him through the brier.

"You have your primroses," she said, "but I did not give them to you. You want too much, I think."

"I want what that ribbon binds," he answered. But she turned away and ran toward the house, without waiting to hear.

CHAPTER XXXIII

DORMER COLVILLE IS BLIND

It was late when Dormer Colville reached the quiet sea-coast village of Royan on the evening of his return to the west. He did not seek Mrs. St. Pierre Lawrence until the luncheon hour next morning, when he was informed that she was away from home.

"Madame has gone to Paris," the man said, who, with his wife, was left in charge of the empty house. "It was a sudden resolution, one must conclude," he added, darkly, "but Madame took no one into her confidence. She re-received news by post, which must have brought about this sudden decision."

Colville was intimately acquainted with his cousin's affairs; many hazarded an opinion that, without the help of Madame St. Pierre Lawrence, this rolling stone would have been bare enough. She had gone to Paris for one of two reasons, he concluded. Either she had expected him to return thither from London, and had gone to meet him with the intention of coming to some arrangement as to the disposal of the vast sum of money now in Turner's hands awaiting further developments, or some hitch had occurred with respect to John Turner himself.

Dormer Colville returned, thoughtfully, to his lodging, and in the evening set out for Paris.

He himself had not seen Turner since that morning in

the banker's office in the Rue Lafayette, when they had parted so unceremoniously, in a somewhat heated spirit. But, on reflection, Colville, who had sought to reassure himself with regard to one whose name stood for the incarnation of gastronomy and mental density in the Anglo-French clubs of Paris, had come to the conclusion that nothing was to be gained by forcing a quarrel upon Turner. It was impossible to bring home to him an accusation of complicity in an outrage which had been carried through with remarkable skill. And when it is impossible to force home an accusation, a wise man will hold his tongue.

Colville could not prove that Turner had known Barebone to be in the carriage waiting in the courtyard, and his own action in the matter had been limited to the interposition of his own clumsy person between Colville and the window; which might, after all, have been due to stupidity. This, as a matter of fact, was Mrs. St. Pierre Lawrence's theory on the subject. For that lady, resting cheerfully on the firm basis of a self-confidence which the possession of money nearly always confers on women, had laughed at Turner all her life, and now proposed to continue that course of treatment.

"Take my word," she had assured Colville, "he was only acting in his usual dense way, and probably thinks now that you are subject to brief fits of mental aberration. I am not afraid of him or anything that he can do. Leave him to me, and devote all your attention to finding Loo Barebone again."

Upon which advice Colville had been content to act. He had a faith in Mrs. St. Pierre Lawrence's wit which was almost as great as her own; and thought, perhaps rightly enough, that if any one were a match for John Turner it was his sprightly and capable client. For there are two

ways of getting on in this world : one is to get credit for being cleverer than you are, and the other to be cleverer than your neighbour suspects. But the latter plan is seldom followed, for the satisfaction it provides must necessarily be shared with no confidant.

Colville knew where to look for Mrs. St. Pierre Lawrence in Paris, where she always took an apartment in a quiet and old-fashioned hotel rejoicing in a select Royalist clientèle on the Place Vendôme. On arriving at the capital, he hurried thither, and was told that the lady he sought had gone out a few minutes earlier. "But Madame's maid," the porter added, "is no doubt within."

Colville was conducted to Mrs. St. Pierre Lawrence's room, and was hardly there before the lady's French maid came hurrying in with upraised hands.

"A just Heaven has assuredly sent Monsieur at this moment!" she exclaimed. "Madame only quitted this room ten minutes ago, and she was agitated—she, who is usually so calm. She would tell me nothing ; but I know—I, who have done Madame's hair these ten years! And there is only one thing that could cause her anxiety—except, of course, any mishap to Monsieur ; that would touch the heart—yes!"

"You are very kind, Catherine," said Colville, with a laugh, "to think me so important. Is that letter for me?" And he pointed to a note in the woman's hand.

"But—yes!" was the reply, and she gave up the letter, somewhat reluctantly. "There is only one thing, and that is money," she concluded, watching him tear open the envelope.

"I am going to John Turner's office," Mrs. St. Pierre Lawrence wrote. "If, by some lucky chance, you should pass through Paris, and happen to call this morning, follow me to the Rue Lafayette. M. St. P. L."

It was plain enough. Colville reflected that Mrs. St. Pierre Lawrence had heard of the success of his mission to England and the safe return to Gemosac of Loo Barebone. For the moment, he could not think how the news could have reached her. She might have heard it from Miriam Liston; for their journey back to Gemosac had occupied nearly a week. On learning the good news, Mrs. St. Pierre Lawrence had promptly grasped the situation; for she was very quick in thought and deed. The money would be wanted at once. She had gone to Turner's office to withdraw it in person.

Dormer Colville bought a flower in a shop in the Rue de la Paix, and had it affixed to his buttonhole by the handmaid of Flora, who made it her business to linger over the office with a gentle familiarity no doubt pleasing enough to the majority of her clients.

Colville was absent-minded as he drove, in a hired carriage, to the Rue Lafayette. He was wondering whether Mrs. St. Pierre Lawrence's maid had any grounds for stating that a mishap to him would touch her mistress's heart. He was a man of unbounded enterprise; but, like many who are gamblers at heart, he was superstitious. He had never dared to try his luck with Mrs. St. Pierre Lawrence. She was so hard, so worldly, so infinitely capable of managing her own affairs and regulating her own life, that to offer her his hand and heart in exchange for her fortune had hitherto been dismissed from his mind as a last expedient, only to be faced when ruin awaited him.

She had only been a widow three years. She had never been a sentimental woman, and now her liberty and her wealth were obviously so dear to her that, in common sense, he could scarcely, with any prospect of success, ask her outright to part with them. Moreover, Mrs. St. Pierre

Lawrence knew all about Dormer Colville, as men say. Which is only a saying ; for no human being knows all about another human being, nor one-half, nor one-tenth of what there is to know. Mrs. St. Pierre Lawrence knew enough, at all events, Colville reflected, rather ruefully, to disillusionise a schoolgirl, much more a woman of the world, knowing good and evil.

He had not lived forty years in the world, and twenty years in that world of French culture which digs and digs into human nature, without having heard philosophers opine that, in matters of the heart, women have no illusions at all, and that it is only men who go blindfold into the tortuous ways of love. But he was too practical a man to build up a false hope on so frail a basis as a theory applied to a woman's heart.

He bought a flower for his buttonhole then, and squared his shoulders, without any definite design. It was a mere habit—the habit acquired by twenty years of unsuccessful enterprise, and renewed effort and deferred hope—of leaving no stone unturned.

His cab wheeled into the Rue Lafayette, and the man drove more slowly, reading the numbers on the houses. Then he stopped altogether, and turned round in his seat.

" Citizen," he said, " there is a great crowd at the house you named. It extends half across the street. I will go no further. It is not I who care about publicity."

Colville stood up and looked in the direction indicated by his driver's whip. The man had scarcely exaggerated. A number of people were waiting their turn on the pavement and out into the roadway, while two gendarmes held the door. Dormer Colville paid his cabman and walked into that crowd, with a sinking heart.

"It is the great English banker," explained an on-looker, even before he was asked, "who has failed."

Colville had never found any difficulty in making his way through a crowd—a useful accomplishment in Paris at all times, where government is conducted, thrones are raised and toppled over, provinces are won and lost again, by the mob. He had that air of distinction which, if wielded good-naturedly, is the surest passport in any concourse. Some, no doubt, recognised him as an Englishman. One after another made way for him. Persons unknown to him commanded others to step aside and let him pass; for the busybody we have always with us.

In a few minutes he was at the top of the stairs, and there elbowed his way into the office, where the five clerks sat bent up over their ledgers. The space on the hither side of the counter was crammed with men, who whispered impatiently together. If any one raised his voice, the clerk whose business it was lifted his head and looked at the speaker with a mute surprise.

One after another these white-faced applicants leant over the counter.

"*Voyons*, Monsieur!" they urged; "tell me this or inform me of that."

But the clerk only smiled and shook his head.

"Patience, Monsieur," he answered. "I cannot tell you yet. We are awaiting advices from London."

"But when will you receive them?" inquired several, at once.

"It may be to-morrow. It may not be for several days."

"But can one see Mr. Turner?" inquired one, more daring than the rest.

"He is engaged."

Colville caught the eye of the clerk, and by a gesture made it known that he must be allowed to pass on into the inner room. Once more his air of the great world, his good clothes, his flower in the buttonhole, gave him the advantage over others; and the clerk got down from his stool.

"Mrs. St. Pierre Lawrence is with him, I know," whispered Colville. "I come by appointment to meet her here."

He was shown in without further trouble, and found Mrs. St. Pierre Lawrence sitting, white-faced and voluble, in the visitors' chair.

John Turner had his usual air of dense placidity, but the narrow black tie he always tied in a bow was inclined slightly to one side; his hair was ruffled, and, although the weather was not warm, his face wore a shiny look. Any banker, with his clients clamouring on the stairs and out into the street, might look as John Turner looked.

"You have heard the news?" asked Mrs. St. Pierre Lawrence, turning sharply in her chair and looking at Colville with an expression of sudden relief. She carried a handkerchief in her hand, but her eyes were dry. She was, after all, only a forerunner of those who now propose to manage human affairs. And even in these later days of their great advance, they have not left their pocket-handkerchiefs behind them.

"I was told by one of the crowd," replied Colville, with a side smile full of sympathy for Turner, "that the—er—bank had come to grief."

"Was just telling Mrs. St. Pierre Lawrence," said Turner, imperturbably, "that it is too early in the day to throw up the sponge and cry out that all is lost."

"All!" echoed Colville, angrily. "But do you mean to say— Why, surely, there is generally something left."

Turner shrugged his shoulders and sat in silence, gnawing the middle joint of his thumb.

"But I must have the money!" cried Mrs. St. Pierre Lawrence. "It is most important, and I must have it at once. I withdraw it all. See, I brought my cheque-book with me. And I know that there are over a hundred thousand pounds in my account. As well as that, you hold securities for two hundred and fifty thousand more—my whole fortune. The money is not yours: it is mine. I draw it all out, and I insist on having it."

Turner continued to bite his thumb, and glanced at her without speaking.

"Now, damn it all, Turner!" said Colville, in a voice suddenly hoarse; "hand it over, man."

"I tell you it is gone," was the answer.

"What? Three hundred and fifty thousand pounds? Then you are a rogue! You are a fraudulent trustee! I always thought you were a damned scoundrel, Turner, and now I know it. I'll get you to the galleys for the rest of your life, I promise you that."

"You will gain nothing by that," returned the banker, staring at the date-card in front of him. "And you will lose any chance there is of recovering something from the wreck. Mrs. St. Pierre Lawrence had better take the advice of her lawyer—in preference to yours."

"Then I am ruined!" said that lady, rising, with an air of resolution. She was brave, at all events.

"At the present moment, it looks like it," admitted Turner, without meeting her eye.

"What am I to do?" murmured Mrs. St. Pierre Lawrence, looking helplessly round the room and finally at the banker's stolid face.

"Like the rest of us, I suppose," he admitted. "Begin

the world afresh. Perhaps your friends will come forward."

And he looked calmly toward Colville. Mrs. St. Pierre Lawrence's face suddenly flushed, and she turned away toward the door. Turner rose, laboriously, and opened it.

"There is another staircase through this side door," he said, opening a second door, which had the appearance of a cupboard. "You can avoid the crowd."

They passed out together, and Turner, having closed the door behind them, crossed the room to where a small mirror was suspended. He set his tie straight and smoothed his hair, and then returned to his chair, with a vague smile on his face.

Colville took the vacant seat in Mrs. St. Pierre Lawrence's brougham. She still held a handkerchief in her hand.

"I do not mind for myself," she exclaimed, suddenly, when the carriage moved out of the court-yard. "It is only for your sake, Dormer."

She turned and glanced at him with eyes that shone, but not with tears.

"Oh! Don't you understand?" she asked, in a whisper. "Don't you see, Dormer?"

"A way out of it?" he answered, hurriedly, almost interrupting her. He withdrew his hand, upon which she had laid her own; withdrew it sympathetically, almost tenderly. "See a way out of it?" he repeated, in a reflective and business-like voice. "No, I am afraid, for the moment, I don't."

He sat stroking his moustache, looking out of the window, while she looked out of the other, resolutely blinking back her tears. They drove back to her hotel without speaking.

CHAPTER XXXIV

A SORDID MATTER

"*Bon Dieu!* my old friend, what do you expect?" replied Madame de Chantonnay to a rather incoherent statement made to her one May afternoon by the Marquis de Gemosac. "It is the month of May," she further explained, indicating with a gesture of her dimpled hand the roses abloom all around them. For the Marquis had found her in a chair beneath the mulberry-tree in the old garden of that house near Gemosac which looks across the river toward the sea. "It is the month of May. One is young. Such things have happened since the world began. They will happen until it ends, Marquis. It happened in our own time, if I remember correctly."

And Madame de Chantonnay heaved a prodigious sigh, in memory of the days that were no more.

"Given a young man of enterprise and not bad looking, I allow. He has the grand air and his face is not without distinction. Given a young girl, fresh as a flower, young, innocent, not without feeling. Ah! I know, for I was like that myself. Place them in a garden, in the springtime. What will they talk of—politics? Ah—bah! Let them have long evenings together while their elders play chess or a hand at bézique. What game will they play? A much older game than chess or bézique, I fancy."

"But the circumstances were so exceptional," protested

the Marquis, who had a pleased air, as if his anger were not without an antidote.

"Circumstances may be exceptional, my friend, but Love is a Rule. You allow him to stay six weeks in the château, seeing Juliette daily, and then you are surprised that one fine morning Monsieur de Bourbon comes to you and tells you brusquely, as you report it, that he wants to marry your daughter."

"Yes," admitted the Marquis. "He was what you may describe as brusque. It is the English way, perhaps, of treating such matters. Now, for myself I should have been warmer, I think. I should have allowed myself a little play, as it were. One says a few pretty things—is it not so? One suggests that the lady is an angel and oneself entirely unworthy of a happiness which is only to be compared with the happiness that is promised to us in the hereafter. It is an occasion upon which to be eloquent."

"Not for the English," corrected Madame de Chantonnay, holding up a hand to emphasise her opinion. "And you must remember, that although our friend is French, he has been brought up in that cold country—by a minister of their frozen religion, I understand. I, who speak to you, know what they are, for once I had an Englishman in love with me. It was in Paris, when Louis XVIII. was King. And did this Englishman tell me that he was heart-broken, I ask you? Never! On the contrary, he appeared to be of an indifference only to be compared with the indifference of a tree. He seemed to avoid me rather than seek my society. Once, he made believe to forget that he had been presented to me. A ruse—a mere ruse to conceal his passion. But I knew, I knew always."

"And what was the poor man's fate? What was his name, Comtesse?"

"I forget, my friend. For the moment I have forgotten it. But tell me more about Monsieur de Bourbon and Juliette. He is passionately in love with her, of course; he is so miserable."

The Marquis reflected for a few moments.

"Well," he said, at last, "he may be so; he may be so, Comtesse."

"And you—what did you say?"

The Marquis looked carefully round before replying. Then he leant forward with his forefinger raised delicately to the tip of his nose.

"I temporised, Comtesse," he said, in a low voice. "I explained as gracefully as one could that it was too early to think of such a development—that I was taken by surprise."

"Which could hardly have been true," put in Madame de Chantonnay in an audible aside to the mulberry-tree, "for neither Guienne nor la Vendée will be taken by surprise."

"I said, in other words—a good many words, the more the better, for one must be polite—'Secure your throne, Monsieur, and you shall marry Juliette.' But it is not a position into which one hurries the last of the house of Gemosac—to be the wife of an unsuccessful claimant, eh?"

Madame de Chantonnay approved in one gesture of her stout hand of these principles and of the Marquis de Gemosac's masterly demonstration of them.

"And Monsieur de Bourbon—did he accept these conditions?"

"He seemed to, Madame. He seemed content to do so," replied the Marquis, tapping his snuff-box and avoiding the lady's eye.

"And Juliette?" inquired Madame, with a sidelong glance.

"Oh, Juliette is sensible," replied the fond father. "My daughter is, I hope, sensible, Comtesse."

"Give yourself no uneasiness, my old friend," said Madame de Chantonnay, heartily. "She is charming."

Madame sat back in her chair and fanned herself thoughtfully. It was the fashion of that day to carry a fan and wield it with grace and effect. To fan oneself did not mean that the heat was oppressive, any more than the use of incorrect English signifies to-day ill-breeding or a lack of education. Both are an indication of a laudable desire to be unmistakably in the movement of one's day.

Over her fan Madame cast a sidelong glance at the Marquis, whom she, like many of his friends, suspected of being much less simple and spontaneous than he appeared.

"Then they are not formally affianced?" she suggested.

"*Mon Dieu!* no. I clearly indicated that there were other things to be thought of at the present time. A very arduous task lies before him, but he is equal to it, I am certain. My conviction as to that grows as one knows him better."

"But you are not prepared to allow the young people to force you to take a leap in the dark," suggested Madame de Chantonnay. "And that poor Juliette must consume her soul in patience; but she is sensible, as you justly say. Yes, my dear Marquis, she is charming."

They were thus engaged in facile talk when Albert de Chantonnay emerged from the long window of his study, a room opening on to a moss-grown terrace, where this plotter walked to and fro like another Richelieu and brooded over nation-shaking schemes.

He carried a letter in his hand and wore an air of genuine perturbment. But even in his agitation he looked carefully round before he spoke.

"Here," he said to the Marquis and his fond mother, who watched him with complacency—"here I have a letter from Dormer Colville. It is necessarily couched in very cautious language. He probably knows, as I know, that any letter addressed to me is liable to be opened. I have reason to believe that some of my letters have not only been opened, but that copies of them are actually in the possession of that man—the head of that which is called the Government."

He turned and looked darkly into a neighbouring clump of rhododendrons, as if Louis Napoleon were perhaps lurking there. But he was nevertheless quite right in his suspicions, which were verified twenty years later, along with much duplicity which none had suspected.

"Nevertheless," he went on, "I know what Colville seeks to convey to us, and is now hurrying away from Paris to confirm to us by word of mouth. The bank of John Turner in the Rue Lafayette has failed, and with it goes all the fortune of Madame St. Pierre Lawrence."

Both his hearers exclaimed aloud, and Madame de Chantonnay showed signs of a desire to swoon; but as no one took any notice, she changed her mind.

"It is a ruse to gain time," explained Albert, brushing the thin end of his moustache upward with a gesture of resolution. "Just as the other was a ruse to gain time. It is at present a race between two resolute parties. The party which is ready first and declares itself will be the victor. For to-day our poor France is in the gutter: she is in the hands of the canaille, and the canaille will accept the first who places himself upon an elevation and scatters gold. What care they—King or Emperor, Emperor or King! It is the same to them so long as they have a change of some sort and see, or think they see, gain to themselves to be snatched from it."

From which it will be seen that Albert de Chantonnay knew his countrymen.

"But," protested Madame de Chantonnay, who had a Frenchwoman's inimitable quickness to grasp a situation—"but the Government could scarcely cause a bank to fail—such an old-established bank as Turner's, which has existed since the day of Louis XIV.—in order to gain time."

"An unscrupulous Government can do anything in France," replied the lady's son. "Their existence depends upon delay, and they are aware of it. They would ruin France rather than forego their own aggrandisement. And this is part of their scheme. They seek to delay us at all costs. To kidnap de Bourbon was the first move. It failed. This is their second move. What must be our counter-move?"

He clasped his hands behind his willowy back and paced slowly backward and forward. By a gesture, Madame de Chantonnay bade the Marquis keep silence while she drew his attention to the attitude of her son. When he paused and fingered his whisker she gasped excitedly.

"I have it," said Albert, with an upward glance of inspiration.

"Yes, my son?"

"The Beauvoir estate," replied Albert, "left to me by my uncle. It is worth three hundred thousand francs. That is enough for the moment. That must be our counter-move."

Madame de Chantonnay protested volubly. For if Frenchmen are ready to sacrifice, or, at all events, to risk all for a sentiment—and history says nothing to the contrary—Frenchwomen are eminently practical and far-sighted.

Madame had a hundred reasons why the Beauvoir estate should not be sold. Many of them contradicted each other. She was not what may be called a close reasoner, but she was

roughly effective. Many a general has won a victory not by the accuracy, but by the volume of his fire.

"What will become of France," she cried to Albert's retreating back as he walked to and fro, "if none of the old families has a sou to bless itself with? And Heaven knows that there are few enough remaining now. Besides, you will want to marry some day, and what will your bride say when you have no money? There are no *dots* growing in the hedgerows now. Not that I am a stickler for a *dot*. Give me heart, I always say, and keep the money yourself. And some day you will find a loving heart, but no *dot*. And there is a tragedy at once—ready made. Is it not so, my old friend?"

She turned to the Marquis de Gemosac for confirmation of this forecast.

"It is a danger, Madame," was the reply. "It is a danger which it would be well to foresee."

They had discussed a hundred times the possibility of a romantic marriage between their two houses. Juliette and Albert—the two last representatives of an old nobility long-famed in the annals of the west—might well fall in love with each other. It would be charming, Madame thought; but, alas! Albert would be wise to look for a *dot*.

The Marquis paused. Again he temporised. For he could not all in an instant decide which side of this question to take. He looked at Albert, frail, romantic; an ideal representative of that old nobility of France which was never practical, and elected to go to the guillotine rather than seek to cultivate that modern virtue.

"At the same time, Madame, it is well to remember that a loan offered now may reasonably be expected to bring such a return in the future as will provide *dots* for the de Chantonnays to the end of time."

Madame was about to make a spirited reply; she might even have suggested that the Beauvoir estate would be better apportioned to Albert's wife than to Juliette as the wife of another, but Albert himself stopped in front of them and swept away all argument by a passionate gesture of his small, white hand.

"It is concluded," he said. "I sell the Beauvoir estate! Have not the Chantonnays proved a hundred times that they are equal to any sacrifice for the sake of France?"

CHAPTER XXXV

A SQUARE MAN

All through the summer of 1851—a year to be marked for all time in the minds of historians, not in red, but in black letters—the war of politics tossed France hither and thither.

There were, at this time, five parties contending for mastery. Should one of these appear for the moment to be about to make itself secure in power, the other four would at once unite to tear the common adversary from his unstable position. Of these parties, only two were of real cohesion: the Legitimists and the Bonapartists. The Socialists, the Moderate Republicans, and the Orleanists were too closely allied in the past to be friendly in the present. Socialists are noisy, but rarely clever. A man who in France describes himself as Moderate must not expect to be popular for any length of time. The Orleanists were only just out of office. It was scarcely a year since Louis Philippe had died in exile at Claremont—only three years since he signed his abdication and hurried across to Newhaven. It was not the turn of the Orleanists.

There is no quarrel so deadly as a family quarrel; no fall so sudden as that of a house divided against itself. All through the spring and summer of 1851 France exhibited herself in the eyes of the world a laughing-stock to her enemies, a thing of pity to those who loved that great country.

The Republic of 1848 was already a house divided against itself.

Its President, Louis Bonaparte, had been elected for four years. He was, as the law then stood, not eligible again until after the lapse of another four years. His party tried to abrogate this law, and failed. "No matter," they said, "we shall elect him again, and President he shall be, despite the law."

This was only one of a hundred such clouds, no bigger than a man's hand, arising at this time on the political horizon. For France was beginning to wander down that primrose path where a law is only a law so long as it is convenient.

There was one man, Louis Bonaparte, who kept his head when others lost that invaluable adjunct; who pushed on doggedly to a set purpose; whose task was hard even in France, and would have been impossible in any other country. For it is only in France that ridicule does not kill. And twice within the last fifteen years—once at Strasbourg, once at Boulogne—he had made the world hold its sides at the mention of his name, greeting with the laughter which is imbittered by scorn, a failure damned by ridicule.

It has been said that Louis Bonaparte never gave serious thought to the Legitimist party. He had inherited, it would seem, that invaluable knowledge of men by which his uncle had risen to the greatest throne of modern times. He knew that a party is never for a moment equal to a Man. And the Legitimists had no man. They had only the Comte de Chambord.

At Frohsdorff they still clung to their hopes, with that old-world belief in the ultimate revival of a dead régime which was eminently characteristic. And at Frohsdorff there died, in the October of this year, the Duchess of

Angoulême, Marie Therese Charlotte, daughter of Marie Antoinette, who had despised her two uncles, Louis XVIII. and Charles X., for the concessions they had made—who was more Royalist than the King. She was the last of her generation, the last of her family, and with her died a part of the greatness of France, almost all the dignity of royalty, and the last master-mind of the Bourbon race.

If, as Albert de Chantonnny stated, the failure of Turner's bank was nothing but a ruse to gain time, it had the desired effect. For a space, nothing could be undertaken, and the Marquis de Gemosac and his friends were hindered from continuing the work they had so successfully begun.

All through the summer Loo Barebone remained in France, at Gemosac as much as anywhere. The Marquis de Gemosac himself went to Frohsdorff.

"If she had been ten years younger," he said, on his return, "I could have persuaded her to receive you. She has money. All the influence is hers. It is she who has had the last word in all our affairs since the death of the Duc de Berri. But she is old—she is broken. I think she is dying, my friend."

It was the time of the vintage again. Barebone remembered the last vintage, and his journey through those provinces that supply all the world with wine, with Dormer Colville for a companion. Since then he had journeyed alone. He had made a hundred new friends, had been welcomed in a hundred historic houses. Wherever he had passed, he had left enthusiasm behind him—and he knew it.

He had grown accustomed to his own power, and yet its renewed evidence was a surprise to him every day. There was something unreal in it. There is always something unreal in fame, and great men know in their own hearts

that they are not great. It is only the world that thinks them so. When they are alone—in a room by themselves—they feel for a moment their own smallness. But the door opens, and in an instant they arise and play their part mechanically.

This had come to be Barebone's daily task. It was so easy to make his way in this world, which threw its doors open to him, greeted him with outstretched hands, and only asked him to charm them by being himself. He had not even to make an effort to appear to be that which he was not. He had only to be himself, and they were satisfied.

Part of his rôle was Juliette de Gemosac. He found it quite easy to make love to her; and she, it seemed, desired nothing better. Nothing definite had been said by the Marquis de Gemosac. They were not formally affianced. They were not forbidden to see each other. But the irregularity of these proceedings lent a certain spice of surreptitiousness to their intercourse which was not without its charm. They did not see so much of each other after Loo had spoken to the Marquis de Gemosac on this subject; for Barebone had to make visits to other parts of France. Once or twice Juliette herself went to stay with relatives. During these absences they did not write to each other.

It was, in fact, impossible for Barebone to keep up any correspondence whatever. He heard that Dormer Colville was still in Paris, seeking to snatch something from the wreck of Mrs. St. Pierre Lawrence's fortune. The Marquis de Gemosac had been told that affairs might yet be arranged. He was no financier, however, he admitted; he did not understand such matters, and all that he knew was that the promised help from the Englishwoman was not forthcoming.

"It is," he concluded, "a question of looking elsewhere.

It is not only that we want money. It is that we must have it at once."

It was not, strictly speaking, Loo's part to think of or to administer the money. His was the part to be played by Kings—so easy, if the gift is there, so impossible to acquire if it be lacking—to know many people and to charm them all.

Thus the summer ripened into autumn. It had been another great vintage in the south, and Bordeaux was more than usually busy when Barebone arrived there, at daybreak, one morning in November, having posted from Toulouse. He was more daring in winter, and went fearlessly through the streets. In cold weather it is so much easier for a man to conceal his identity ; for a woman to hide her beauty, if she wish to—which is a large If. Barebone could wear a fur collar and turn it up round that tell-tale chin, which made the passer-by pause and turn to look at him again if it was visible.

He breakfasted at the old-fashioned inn in the heart of the town, where to this day the diligences deposit their passengers, and then he made his way to the quay, from whence he would take passage down the river. It was a cold morning, and there are few colder cities, south of Paris, than Bordeaux. Barebone hurried, his breath frozen on the fur of his collar. Suddenly he stopped. His new self—that phantom second-nature bred of custom—vanished in the twinkling of an eye, and left him plain Loo Barebone, of Farlingford, staring across the green water toward "The Last Hope," deep-laden, anchored in mid-stream.

Seeing him stop, a boatman ran toward him from a neighbouring flight of steps.

"An English ship, monsieur," he said ; "just come in. Her anchors are hardly home. Does monsieur wish to go on board ?"

"Of course I do, comrade—as quick as you like," he answered, with a gay laugh. It was odd that the sight of this structure, made of human hands, should change him in a flash of thought, should make his heart leap in his breast.

In a few minutes he was seated in the wherry, half way out across the stream. Already a face was looking over the bulwarks. The hands were on the forecastle, still busy clearing decks after the confusion of letting go anchor and hauling in the jib-boom.

Barebone could see them leave off work and turn to look at him. One or two raised a hand in salutation and then turned again to their task. Already the mate—a Farlingford man, who had succeeded Loo—was standing on the rail fingering a coil of rope.

"Old man is down below," he said, giving Barebone a hand. From the forecastle came sundry grunts, and half a dozen heads were jerked sideways at him.

Captain Clubbe was in the cabin, where the remains of breakfast had been pushed to one end of the table to make room for pens and ink. The Captain was laboriously filling in the countless documents required by the French custom-house. He looked up, pen in hand, and all the wrinkles, graven by years of hardship and trouble, were swept away like writing from a slate.

He laid aside his pen and held his hand out across the table.

"Had your breakfast?" he asked, curtly, with a glance at the empty coffee-pot.

Loo laughed as he sat down. It was all so familiar—the disorder of the cabin; the smell of lamp-oil; the low song of the wind through the rigging, that came humming in at the doorway, which was never closed, night or day, unless the seas were washing to and fro on the main deck. He

knew everything so well; the very pen and the rarely used ink-pot; the Captain's attitude, and the British care that he took not to speak with his lips that which was in his heart.

"Well," said Captain Clubbe, taking up his pen again, "how are you getting on?"

"With what?"

"With the business that brought you to this country," answered Clubbe, with a sudden gruffness; for he was, like the majority of big men, shy.

Barebone looked at him across the table.

"Do you know what the business is that brought me to this country?" he asked. And Captain Clubbe looked thoughtfully at the point of his pen.

"Did the Marquis de Gemosac and Dormer Colville tell you everything, or only a little?"

"I don't suppose they told me everything," was the reply. "Why should they? I am only a seafaring man."

"But they told you enough," persisted Barebone, "for you to draw your own conclusions as to my business over here."

"Yes," answered Clubbe, with a glance across the table. "Is it going badly?"

"No. On the contrary, it is going splendidly," answered Barebone, gaily; and Captain Clubbe ducked his head down again over the papers of the French custom-house. "It is going splendidly, but——"

He paused. Half an hour ago he had no thought in his mind of Captain Clubbe or of Farlingford. He had come on board merely to greet his old friends, to hear some news of home, to take up for a moment that old self of bygone days and drop it again. And now, in half a dozen questions

and answers, whither was he drifting? Captain Clubbe filled in a word, slowly and very legibly.

"But I am not the man, you know," said Barebone, slowly. It was as if the sight of that just man had bidden him cry out the truth. "I am not the man they think me. My father was not the son of Louis XVI., I know that now. I did not know it at first, but I know it now. And I have been going on with the thing, all the same."

Clubbe sat back in his chair. He was large and ponderous in body. And the habit of the body at length becomes the nature of the mind.

"Who has been telling you that?" he asked.

"Dormer Colville. He told me one thing first and then the other. Only he and you and I know of it."

"Then he must have told one lie," said Clubbe, reflectively. "One that we know of. And what he says is of no value either way; for he doesn't know. No one knows. Your father was a friend of mine, man and boy, and he didn't know. He was not the same as other men; I know that—but nothing more."

"Then, if you were me, you would give yourself the benefit of the doubt?" asked Barebone, with a rather reckless laugh. "For the sake of others—for the sake of France?"

"Not I," replied Clubbe, bluntly.

"But it is practically impossible to go back now," explained Loo. "It would be the ruin of all my friends, the downfall of France. In my position, what would you do?"

"I don't understand your position," replied Clubbe. "I don't understand politics; I am only a seafaring man. But there is only one thing to do—the square thing."

"But," protested Dormer Colville's pupil, "I cannot throw over my friends. I cannot abandon France now."

"The square thing," repeated the sailor, stubbornly. "The square thing; and damn your friends — damn France!"

He rose as he spoke, for they had both heard the customs officers come on board; and these functionaries were now bowing at the cabin-door.

CHAPTER XXXVI

MRS. ST. PIERRE LAWRENCE DOES NOT UNDERSTAND

It was early in November that the report took wing in Paris that John Turner's bank was, after all, going to weather the storm. Dormer Colville was among the first to hear this news, and strangely enough he did not at once impart it to Mrs. St. Pierre Lawrence.

All through the year, John Turner had kept his client supplied with ready money. He had, moreover, made no change in his own mode of living. Which things are a mystery to all who have no money of their own nor the good fortune to handle other people's. There is no doubt some explanation of the fact that bankers and other financiers seem to fail, and even become bankrupt, without tangible effect upon their daily comfort, but the unfinancial cannot expect to understand it.

There had, as a matter of fact, been no question of discomfort for Mrs. St. Pierre Lawrence either.

"Can I spend as much as I like?" she had asked Turner, and his reply had been in the affirmative.

"No use in saving?"

"None whatever," he replied. To which Mrs. St. Pierre Lawrence made answer that she did not understand things at all.

"It is no use collecting straws against a flood," the banker answered, sleepily.

There was, of course, no question now of supplying the necessary funds to the Marquis de Gemosac and Albert de Chantonnay, who, it was understood, were raising the money, not without difficulty, elsewhere. Mrs. St. Pierre Lawrence had indeed heard little or nothing of her Royalist friends in the west. Human nature is the same, it would appear, all the world over, but the upper crust is always the hardest.

When Colville was informed of the rumour, he remembered that he had never quarrelled with John Turner. He had, of course, said some hard things in the heat of the moment, but Turner had not retorted. There was no quarrel. Colville, therefore, took an early opportunity of lunching at the club then reputed to have the best chef in Paris. He went late and found that the majority of members had finished déjeuner and were taking coffee in one or other of the smoking-rooms.

After a quick and simple meal, Colville lighted a cigarette and went upstairs. There were two or three small rooms where members smoked or played cards or read the newspapers, and in the quietest of these John Turner was alone, asleep. Colville walked backward into the room, talking loudly as he did so with a friend in the passage. When well over the threshold he turned. John Turner, whose slumbers had been rudely disturbed, was sitting up rubbing his eyes. The surprise was of course mutual, and for a moment there was an awkward pause ; then, with a smile of frank good-fellowship, Colville advanced, holding out his hand.

"I hope we have known each other too many years, old fellow," he said, "to bear any lasting ill-will for words spoken in the heat of anger or disappointment, eh ? "

He stood in front of the banker frankly holding out the hand of forgiveness, his head a little on one side, that melancholy smile of toleration for poor human weakness in his eyes.

"Well," admitted Turner, "we've certainly known each other a good many years."

He somewhat laboriously hoisted himself up, his head emerging from his tumbled collar like the head of a tortoise aroused from sleep, and gave into Colville's affectionate grasp a limp and nerveless hand.

"No one could feel for you more sincerely than I do," Colville assured him, drawing forward a chair,—"more than I have done all through these trying months."

"Very kind, I'm sure," murmured Turner, looking drowsily at his friend's necktie. One must look somewhere, and Turner always gazed at the necktie of any one who sat straight in front of him, which usually induced an uneasy fingering of that ornament and an early consultation of the nearest mirror. "Have a cigar."

There was the faint suggestion of a twinkle beneath the banker's heavy lids as Colville accepted this peace-offering. It was barely twenty-four hours since he had himself launched in Colville's direction the rumour which had brought about this reconciliation.

"And I'm sure," continued the other, turning to cut the end of the cigar, "that no one would be better pleased to hear that better times are coming—eh? What did you say?"

"Nothing. Didn't speak," was the reply to this vague interrogation. Then they talked of other things. There was no lack of topics for conversation at this time in France; indeed, the whole country was in a buzz of talk. But Turner was not, it seemed, in a talkative mood. Only once did he rouse himself to take more than a passing interest in the subject touched upon by his easy-going companion.

"Yes," he admitted, "he may be the best cook in Paris, but he is not what he was. It is this Revision of the

Constitution which is upsetting the whole country, especially the lower classes. The man's hand is shaky. I can see it from his way of pouring the mayonnaise over a salad."

After touching upon each fresh topic, Colville seemed to return unconsciously to that which must of necessity be foremost in his companion's thoughts—the possibility of saving Turner's bank from failure. And each time he learnt a little more. At last, with that sympathetic spontaneity which was his chief charm, Dormer Colville laid his hand confidentially on Turner's sleeve.

"Frankly, old fellow," he said, "are you going to pull it through?"

"Frankly, old fellow, I am," was the reply, which made Colville glance hastily at the clock.

"Gad!" he exclaimed, "look at the time. You have kept me gossiping the whole afternoon. Must be off. Nobody will be better pleased than I am to hear the good news. But of course I am mum. Not a word will they hear from me. I *am* glad. Good-bye."

"I dare say you are," murmured Turner to the closed door.

Dormer Colville was that which is known as an opportunist. It was a dull grey afternoon. He would be sure to find Mrs. St. Pierre Lawrence at home. She had taken an apartment in the Rue de Lille in the St. Germain quarter. His way was past the flower-shop, where he sometimes bestowed a fickle custom. He went in and bought a carnation for his buttonhole.

It is to be presumed that John Turner devoted the afternoon to his affairs. It was at all events evening before he also bent his steps toward the Rue de Lille.

Yes, the servant told him, Madame was at home and would assuredly see him. Madame was not alone. No. It

was, however, only Monsieur Colville, who was so frequent a visitor.

Turner followed the servant along the corridor. The stairs had rather tried one who had to elevate such a weight at each step ; he breathed hard, but placidly.

Mrs. St. Pierre Lawrence received him with an unusual *empressement*. Dormer Colville, who was discovered sitting as far from her as the size of the room allowed, was less eager, but he brought forward a chair for the banker and glanced sharply at his face as he sat down.

"So glad to see you," the hostess explained. "It is really kind of you to come and cheer one up on such a dull afternoon. Dormer and I—won't you take off your coat? No, let *me* put it aside for you. Dormer and I were just—just saying how dull it was. Weren't we ? "

She looked from one to the other with a rather unnatural laugh. One would have thought that she was engaged in carrying off a difficult situation and, for so practised a woman of the world, not doing it very well. Her cheeks were flushed, which made her look younger, and a subtle uncertainty in her voice and manner added to this illusion charmingly. For a young girl's most precious possession is her inexperience. Mrs. St. Pierre Lawrence, for the first time in her life, was not sure of herself.

"Now I hope you have not come on business," she added, drawing forward her own chair and passing a quick hand over her hair. "Bother business ! Do not let us think about it."

"Not exactly," replied Turner, recovering his breath. "Quite agree with you. Let us say, 'Bother business,' and not think of it. Though, for an old man who is getting stout, there is nothing much left but business and his dinner, eh ? "

"No. Do not say that," cried the lady. "Never say that. It is time enough to think that years hence when we are all white-haired. But I used to think that myself once, you know. When I first had my money. Do you remember? I was so pleased to have all that wealth that I determined to learn all about cheque-books and things and manage it myself. So you taught me, and at last you admitted that I was an excellent man of business. I know I thought I was myself. And I suppose I lapsed into a regular business woman and only thought of money and how to increase it. How horrid you must have thought me!"

"Never did that," protested Turner, stoutly.

"But I know I learnt to think much too much about it," Mrs. St. Pierre Lawrence went on eagerly. "And now that it is all gone, I do not care *that* for it."

She snapped her finger and thumb and laughed gaily.

"Not that," she repeated. She turned and glanced at Dormer Colville, raising her eyebrows in some mute interrogation only comprehensible to him. "Shall I tell him?" she asked, with a laugh of happiness not very far removed from tears. Then she turned to the banker again.

"Listen," she said. "I am going to tell you something which no one else in the world can tell you. Dormer and I are going to be married. I dare say lots of people will say that they have expected it for a long time. They can say what they like. We don't care. And I am glad that you are the first person to hear it. We have only just settled it, so you are the very first to be told. And I am glad to tell you before anybody else because you have been so kind to me always. You have been my best friend, I think. And the kindest thing you ever did for me was to lose my money, for if you had not lost it, Dormer never would have asked me to marry him. He has just said so himself. And I

suppose all men feel that. All the nice ones, I mean. It is one of the drawbacks of being rich, is it not?"

"I suppose it is," answered Turner, stolidly, without turning an eyelash in the direction of Colville. "Perhaps that is why no one has ever asked me to marry them."

Mrs. St. Pierre Lawrence laughed jerkily at this witticism. She laughed again when John Turner rose from his chair to congratulate her, but the laugh suddenly ceased when he raised her hand to his lips with a courtesy which was even in those days dying out of the world, and turned away from him hastily. She stood with her back toward them for a minute or two looking at some flowers on a side table. Then she came back into the middle of the room, all smiles, replacing her handkerchief in her pocket.

"So that is the news I have to tell you," she said.

John Turner had placidly resumed his chair after shaking hands with Dormer Colville for the second time since luncheon.

"Yes," he answered, "it is news indeed. And I have a little news to give you. I do not say that it is quite free from the taint of business, but at all events it is news. Like yours, it has the merit of being at first hand, and you are the first to hear it. No one else could tell it to you."

He broke off and rubbed his chin while he looked apathetically at Colville's necktie.

"It has another merit, rare enough," he went on. "It is good news. I think, in fact I may say I am sure, that we shall pull through now and your money will be safely returned to you."

"I am so glad," said Mrs. St. Pierre Lawrence, with a glance at Dormer Colville. "I cannot tell you how glad I am."

She looked at the banker with bright eyes and the flush

still in her cheeks that made her look younger and less sure of herself.

"Not only for my own sake, you know. For yours, because I am sure you must be relieved, and for—well, for everybody's sake. Tell me all about it, please." And she pushed her chair sideways nearer to Colville's.

John Turner bit the first joint of his thumb reflectively. It is so rare that one can tell any one all about anything.

"Tell me first," Mrs. St. Pierre Lawrence suggested, "whether Miriam Liston's money is all safe as well."

"Miriam's money never was in danger," he replied. "Miriam is my ward; you are only my client. There is no chance of Miriam being able to make ducks and drakes of her money."

"That sounds as if I had been trying to do that with mine."

"Well," admitted the banker, with a placid laugh, "if it had not been for my failure——"

"Don't call it hard names," put in Dormer Colville, generously. "It was not a failure."

"Call it a temporary suspension of payment, then," agreed the banker, imperturbably. "If it had not been for that, half your fortune would have been goodness knows where by now. You wanted to put it into some big speculation in this country, if I remember aright. And big speculations in France are the very devil just now. Whereas, now, you see, it is all safe and you can invest it in the beginning of next year in some good English securities. It seems providential, does it not?"

He rose as he spoke and held out his hand to say good-bye. He asked the question of Colville's necktie, apparently, for he smiled stupidly at it.

"Well, I do not understand business after all, I admit

that," Mrs. St. Pierre Lawrence called out gaily to him as he went toward the door. "I do not understand things at all."

"No, and I don't suppose you ever will," Turner replied as he followed the servant into the corridor.

CHAPTER XXXVII

AN UNDERSTANDING

Loo Barebone went back to the Château de Gemosac after those travels in Provence which terminated so oddly on board "The Last Hope," at anchor in the Garonne River.

The Marquis received him with enthusiasm and a spirit of optimism which age could not dim.

"Everything is going *à merveille!*" he cried. "In three months we shall be ready to strike our blow—to make our great *coup* for France. The failure of Turner's bank was a severe check, I admit, and for a moment I was in despair. But now we are sure that we shall have the money for Albert de Chantonnay's Beauvoir estate by the middle of January. The death of Madame la Duchesse was a misfortune. If we could have persuaded her to receive you—your face would have done the rest, mon ami—we should have been invincible. But she was broken, that poor lady. Think of her life! Few women would have survived half of the troubles that she carried on those proud shoulders from childhood."

They were sitting in the little salon in the building that adjoined the gate-house of Gemosac, of which the stone stairs must have rung beneath the red spurs of fighting men; of which the walls were dented still with the mark of arms.

Barebone had given an account of his journey, which

had been carried through without difficulty. Everywhere success had waited upon him—enthusiasm had marked his passage. In returning to France, he had stolen a march on his enemies, for nothing seemed to indicate that his presence in the country was known to them.

"I tell you," the Marquis explained, "that he has his hands full—that man in Paris. It is only a month since he changed his ministry. Who is this St. Arnaud, his Minister of War? Who is Maupas, his Prefect of Police? Does Monsieur Maupas know that we are nearly ready for our *coup?* Bah! Tell me nothing of that sort, gentlemen."

And this was the universally accepted opinion at this time, of Louis Bonaparte the President of a tottering Republic, divided against itself; a dull man, at his wits' end. For months, all Europe had been turning an inquiring and watchful eye on France. Socialism was rampant. Secret societies honeycombed the community. There was some danger in the air—men knew not what. Catastrophe was imminent, and none knew where to look for its approach. But all thought that it must come at the end of the year. A sort of panic took hold of all classes. They dreaded the end of 1851.

The Marquis de Gemosac spoke openly of these things before Juliette. She had been present when Loo and he talked together of this last journey, so happily accomplished, so fruitful of result. And Loo did not tell the Marquis that he had seen his old ship, "The Last Hope," in the river at Bordeaux, and had gone on board of her.

Juliette listened, as she worked, beneath the lamp at the table in the middle of the room. The lace-work she had brought from the convent-school was not finished yet. It was exquisitely fine and delicate, and Juliette executed the most difficult patterns with a sort of careless ease. Some-

times, when the Marquis was more than usually extravagant in his anticipations of success, or showed a superlative contempt for his foes, Juliette glanced at Barebone over her lace-work, but she rarely took part in the talk when politics were under discussion.

In domestic matters, however, this new châtelaine showed considerable shrewdness. She was not ignorant of the price of hay, and knew to a cask how much wine was stored in the vault beneath the old chapel. On these subjects the Marquis good-humouredly followed her advice sometimes. His word had always been law in the whole neighbourhood. Was he not the head of one of the oldest families in France?

"But, *pardieu*, she shows a wisdom quite phenomenal, that little one," the Marquis would tell his friends, with a hearty laugh. It was only natural that he should consider amusing the idea of uniting wisdom and youth and beauty in one person. It is still a universally accepted law that old people must be wise and young persons only charming. Some may think that they could point to a wise child born of foolish parents; to a daughter who is well-educated and shrewd, possessing a sense of logic, and a mother who is ignorant and foolish; to a son who has more sense than his father: but of course such observers must be mistaken. Old theories must be the right ones. The Marquis had no doubt of this, at all events, and thought it most amusing that Juliette should establish order in the chaos of domestic affairs at Gemosac.

"You are grave," said Juliette to Barebone, one evening soon after his return, when they happened to be alone in the little drawing-room. Barebone was, in fact, not a lively companion; for he had sat staring at the log-fire for quite three minutes when his eyes might assuredly have been

better employed. "You are grave. Are you thinking of your sins?"

"When I think of those, Mademoiselle, I laugh. It is when I think of you that I am grave."

"Thank you."

"So I am always grave, you understand."

She glanced quickly, not at him but toward him, and then continued her lace-making, with the ghost of a smile tilting the corners of her lips.

"It is because I have something to tell you."

"A secret?" she inquired, and she continued to smile, but differently, and her eyes hardened almost to resentment.

"Yes; a secret. It is a secret only known to two other people in the world besides myself. And they will never let you know even that they share it with you, Mademoiselle."

"Then they are not women," she said, with a sudden laugh. "Tell it to me, then—your secret."

There had been an odd suggestion of foreknowledge in her manner, as if she were humouring him by pretending to accept as a secret of vast importance some news which she had long known—that little air of patronage which even schoolgirls bestow, at times, upon white-haired men. It is part of the maternal instinct. But this vanished when she heard that she was to share the secret with two men, and she repeated, impatiently, "Tell me, please."

"It is a secret which will make a difference to us all our lives, Mademoiselle," he said, warningly. "It will not leave us the same as it found us. It has made a difference to all who know it. Therefore, I have only decided to tell you after long consideration. It is, in fact, a point of honour. It is necessary for you to know, whatever the result may be. Of that I have no doubt whatever."

He laughed reassuringly, which made her glance at him gravely, almost anxiously.

"And are you going on telling it to other people, afterward," she inquired; "to my father, for instance?"

"No, Mademoiselle. It comes to you, and it stops at you. I do not mind withholding it from your father, and from all the friends who have been so kind to me in France. I do not mind deceiving kings and emperors, Mademoiselle, and even the People, which is now always spelt in capital letters, and must be spoken of with bated breath."

She gave a scornful little laugh, as at the sound of an old jest—the note of a deathless disdain which was in the air she breathed.

"Not even the newspapers, which are trying to govern France. All that is a question of politics. But when it comes to you, Mademoiselle, that is a different matter."

"Ah!"

"Yes. It is then a question of love."

Juliette slowly changed colour, but she gave a little gay laugh of incredulity and bent her head away from the light of the lamp.

"That is a different code of honour altogether," he said, gravely. "A code one does not wish to tamper with."

"No?" she inquired, with the odd little smile of foreknowledge again.

"No. And, therefore, before I go any farther, I think it best to tell you that I am not what I am pretending to be. I am pretending to be the son of the little Dauphin, who escaped from the Temple. He may have escaped from the Temple; that I don't know. But I know, or at least I think I know, that he is not buried in Farlingford churchyard and he was not my father. I can pass as the grandson of Louis XVI.; I know that. I can deceive all the world.

I can even climb to the throne of France, perhaps. There are many, as you know, who think I shall do it without difficulty. But I do not propose to deceive *you*, Mademoiselle."

There was a short silence, while Loo watched her face. Juliette had not even changed colour. When she was satisfied that he had nothing more to add, she looked at him, her needle poised in the air.

"Do you think it matters?" she asked, in a little cool, even voice.

It was so different from what he had expected that, for a moment, he was taken aback. Captain Clubbe's bluff, uncompromising reception of the same news had haunted his thoughts. "The square thing," that sailor had said, "and damn your friends; damn France." Loo looked at Juliette in doubt; then, suddenly, he understood her point of view; he understood her. He had learnt to understand a number of people and a number of points of view during the last twelve months.

"So long as I succeed?" he suggested.

"Yes," she answered, simply. "So long as you succeed, I do not see that it can matter who you are."

"And if I succeed," pursued Loo, gravely, "will you marry me, Mademoiselle?"

"Oh! I never said that," in a voice that was ready to yield to a really good argument.

"And if I fail—" Barebone paused for an instant. He still doubted his own perception. "And if I fail, you would not marry me under any circumstances?"

"I do not think my father would let me," she answered, with her eyes cast down upon her lace-frame.

Barebone leant forward to put together the logs, which burnt with a white incandescence that told of a frosty night.

The Marquis had business in the town, and would soon return from the notary's, in time to dress for dinner.

"Well," said Loo, over his shoulder, "it is as well to understand each other, is it not?"

"Yes," she answered, significantly. She ignored the implied sarcasm altogether. There was so much meaning in her reply that Loo turned to look at her. She was smiling as she worked.

"Yes," she went on; "you have told me your secret—a secret. But I have the other, too; the secret you have not told me, *mon ami*. I have had it always."

"Ah?"

"The secret that you do not love me," said Juliette, in her little wise, even voice; "that you have never loved me. Ah! You think we do not know. You think that I am too young. But we are never too young to know that, to know all about it. I think we know it in our cradles."

She spoke with a strange philosophy, far beyond her years. It might have been Madame de Chantonnay who spoke, with all that lady's vast experience of life and without any of her folly.

"You think I am pretty. Perhaps I am. Just pretty enough to enable you to pretend, and you have pretended very well at times. You are good at pretending, one must conclude. Oh! I bear no ill-will . . ."

She broke off and looked at him, with a gay laugh, in which there was certainly no note of ill-will to be detected.

"But it is as well," she went on, "as you say, that we should understand each other. Thank you for telling me your secret—the one you have told me. I am flattered at that mark of your confidence. A woman is always glad to

be told a secret, and immediately begins to anticipate the pleasure she will take in telling it to others, in confidence."

She looked up for a moment from her work; for Loo had given a short laugh. She looked, to satisfy herself that it was not the ungenerous laugh that nine men out of ten would have cast at her; and it was not. For Loo was looking at her with frank amusement.

"Oh, yes," she said; "I know that, too. It is one of the items not included in a convent education. It is unnecessary to teach us such things as that. We know them before we go in. Your secret is safe enough with me, however—the one you have told me. That is the least I can promise in return for your confidence. As to the other secret, *bon Dieu!* we will pretend I do not know it, if you like. At all events, you can vow that you never told me, if—if ever you are called upon to do so."

She paused for a moment to finish off a thread. Then, when she reached out her hand for the reel, she glanced at him with a smile, not unkind.

"So you need not pretend any more, monsieur," she said, seeing that Barebone was wise enough to keep silence. "I do not know who you are, *mon ami*," she went on, in a little burst of confidence; "and, as I told you just now, I do not care. And, as to that other matter, there is no ill-will. I only permit myself to wonder, sometimes, if she is pretty. That is feminine, I suppose. One can be feminine quite young, you understand."

She looked at him with unfathomable eyes and a little smile, such as men never forget once they have seen it.

"But you were inclined to be ironical just now, when I said I would marry you if you were successful. So I mention that other secret just to show that the understanding you wish to arrive at may be mutual—there may be two sides to

it. I hear my father coming. That is his voice at the gate. We will leave things as they stand : *n'est ce pas ?* "

She rose as she spoke and went toward the door. The Marquis's voice was raised, and there seemed to be some unusual clamour at the gate.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

A COUP-D'ÉTAT

As the Marquis de Gemosac's step was already on the stairs, Barebone was spared the necessity of agreeing in words to the inevitable.

A moment later the old man hurried into the room. He had not even waited to remove his coat and gloves. A few snow-flakes powdered his shoulders.

"Ah!" he cried, on perceiving Barebone. "Good—you are safe!" He turned to speak to some one who was following him up the stairs with the slower steps of one who knew not his way.

"All is well!" he cried. "He is here. Give yourself no anxiety."

And the second comer crossed the threshold, coming suddenly out of the shadow of the staircase. It was Dormer Colville, white with snow, his face grey and worn. He shook hands with Barebone and bowed to Juliette, but the Marquis gave him no time to speak.

"I go down into the town," he explained, breathlessly. "The streets are full. There is a crowd on the market-place, more especially round the tobacconist's, where the newspapers are to be bought. No newspapers, if you please. The Paris journals of last Sunday, and this is Friday evening. Nothing since that. No Bordeaux journal. No news at all from Paris: absolute silence from Toulouse

and Limoges. 'It is another revolution,' they tell each other. Something has happened and no one knows what. A man comes up to me and tugs at my sleeve. 'Inside your walls, Monsieur le Marquis, waste no time,' he whispers, and is gone. He is some stable-boy. I have seen him somewhere. I! inside my walls! Here in Gemosac, where I see nothing but bare heads as I walk through the streets. Name of God! I should laugh at such a precaution. And while I am still trying to gather information the man comes back to me. 'It is not the people you have to fear,' he whispers in my ear, 'it is the Government. The order for your arrest is at the Gendarmerie, for it was I who took it there. Monsieur Albert was arrested yesterday, and is now in La Rochelle. Madame de Chantonnay's house is guarded. It is from Madame I come.' And again he goes. While I am hesitating, I hear the step of a horse, tired and yet urged to its utmost. It is Dormer Colville, this faithful friend, who is from Paris in thirty-six hours to warn us. He shall tell his story himself."

"There is not much to tell," said Colville, in a hollow voice. He looked round for a chair and sat down rather abruptly. "Louis Bonaparte is absolute master of France; that is all. He must be so by this time. When I escaped from Paris yesterday morning nearly all the streets were barricaded. But the troops were pouring into the city as I rode out—and artillery. I saw one barricade carried by artillery. Thousands must have been killed in the streets of Paris yesterday—— "

"—And, *bon Dieu!* it is called a *coup-d'état*," interrupted the Marquis.

"That was on Tuesday," explained Colville, in his tired voice—"at six o'clock on Tuesday morning. Yesterday and Wednesday were days of massacre."

"But, my friend," exclaimed the Marquis, impatiently, "tell us how it happened. You laugh! It is no time to laugh."

"I do not know," replied Colville, with an odd smile. "I think there is nothing else to be done—it is all so complete. We are all so utterly fooled by this man whom all the world took to be a dolt. On Tuesday morning he arrested seventy-eight of the Representatives. When Paris awoke, the streets had been placarded in the night with the decree of the President of the Republic. The National Assembly was dissolved. The Council of State was dissolved. Martial law was declared. And why? He does not even trouble to give a reason. He has the army at his back. The soldiers cried '*Vive l'Empereur*' as they charged the crowd on Wednesday. He has got rid of his opponents by putting them in prison. Many, it is said, are already on their way to exile in Cayenne; the prisons are full. There is a warrant out against myself; against you, Barebone; against you, of course, Monsieur le Marquis. Albert de Chantonnay was arrested at Tours, and is now in La Rochelle. We may escape—we may get away to-night——"

He paused and looked hurriedly toward the door, for some one was coming up the stairs—some one who wore sabots. It was the servant, Marie, who came unceremoniously into the room with the exaggerated calm of one who realises the gravity of the situation and means to master it.

"The town is on fire," she explained, curtly; "they have begun on the Gendarmerie. Doubtless they have heard that these gentlemen are to be arrested, and it is to give other employment to the gendarmes. But the cavalry has arrived from Saintes, and I come upstairs to ask Monsieur to come down and help. It is my husband who is a fool. Holy Virgin! how many times have I regretted having

married such a blockhead as that. He says he cannot raise the drawbridge. To raise it three feet would be to gain three hours. So I came to get Monsieur," she pointed at Barebone with a steady finger, "who has his wits on the top always and two hands at the end of his arms."

"But it is little use to raise the drawbridge," objected the Marquis. "They will soon get a ladder and place it against the breach in the wall and climb in."

"Not if I am on the wall who amuse myself with a hay-fork, Monsieur le Marquis," replied Marie, with that exaggerated respect which implies a knowledge of mental superiority. She beckoned curtly to Loo and clattered down the stairs, followed by Barebone. The others did not attempt to go to their assistance, and the Marquis de Gemosac had a hundred questions to ask Colville.

The Englishman had little to tell of his own escape. There were so many more important arrests to be made that the overworked police of Monsieur de Maupas had only been able to apportion to him a bungler whom Colville had easily outwitted.

"And Madame St. Pierre Lawrence?" inquired the Marquis.

"Madame quitted Paris on Tuesday for England under the care of John Turner, who had business in London. He kindly offered to escort her across the Channel."

"Then she, at all events, is safe," said the Marquis, with a little wave of the hand indicating his satisfaction. "He is not brilliant, Monsieur Turner—so few English are —but he is solid, I think."

"I think he is the cleverest man I know," said Dormer Colville, thoughtfully. And before they had spoken again Loo Barebone returned.

He, like Marie, had grasped at once the serious aspect of

the situation, whereas the Marquis succeeded only in reaching it with a superficial touch. He prattled of the political crisis in Paris and bade his friends rest assured that law and order must ultimately prevail. He even seemed to cherish the comforting assurance that Providence must in the end interfere on behalf of a Legitimate Succession. For this old noble was the true son of a father who had believed to the end in that King who talked grandiloquently of the works of Seneca and Tacitus while driving from the Temple to his trial, with the mob hooting and yelling imprecations into the carriage windows.

The Marquis de Gemosac found time to give a polite opinion on John Turner while the streets of Gemosac were being cleared by the cavalry from Saintes, and the Gendarmerie, burning briskly, lighted up a scene of bloodshed.

"We have raised the drawbridge a few feet," said Barebone; "but the chains are rusted and may easily be broken by a blacksmith. It will serve to delay them a few minutes; but it is not the mob we seek to keep out, and any organised attempt to break in would succeed in half an hour. We must go, of course."

He turned to Colville, with whom he had met and faced difficulties in the past. Colville might easily have escaped to England with Mrs. St. Pierre Lawrence, but he had chosen the better part. He had undertaken a long journey through disturbed France only to throw in his lot at the end of it with two pre-condemned men. Loo turned to him as to one who had proved himself capable enough in an emergency, brave in face of danger.

"We cannot stay here," he said; "the gates will serve to give us an hour's start, but no more. I suppose there is another way out of the château."

"There are two ways," answered the Marquis. "One leads to a house in the town and the other emerges at the mill down below the walls. But, alas! both are lost sight of. My ancestors——"

"I know the shorter one," put in Juliette, "the passage that leads to the mill. I can show you the entrance to that, which is in the crypt of the chapel, hidden behind the casks of wine."

She spoke to Barebone, only half-concealing, as Marie had done, the fact that the great respect with which the Marquis de Gemosac was treated was artificial, and would fall to pieces under the strain of an emergency—a faint echo of the old régime.

"When you are gone," the girl continued, still addressing Barebone, "Marie and I can keep them out at least an hour —probably more. We may be able to keep them outside the walls all night, and when at last they come in it will take them hours to satisfy themselves that you are not concealed within the enceinte."

She was quite cool, and even smiled at him with a white face.

"You are always right, Mademoiselle, and have a clear head." said Barebone.

"But no heart?" she answered in an undertone, under cover of her father's endless talk to Colville and with a glance which Barebone could not understand.

In a few minutes Dormer Colville pronounced himself ready to go, and refused to waste further precious minutes in response to Monsieur de Gemosac's offers of hospitality. No dinner had been prepared, for Marie had sterner business in hand and could be heard beneath the windows urging her husband to display a courage superior to that of a rabbit. Juliette hurried to the kitchen and there prepared a parcel

of cold meat and bread for the fugitives to eat as they fled.

"We might remain hidden in a remote cottage," Barebone had suggested to Colville, "awaiting the development of events, but our best chance is 'The Last Hope.' She is at Bordeaux, and must be nearly ready for sea."

So it was hurriedly arranged that they should make their way on foot to a cottage on the marsh while Jean was despatched to Bordeaux with a letter for Captain Clubbe.

"It is a pity," said Marie, when informed of this plan, "that it is not I who wear the breeches. But I will make it clear to Jean that if he fails to carry out his task he need not show his face at the gate again."

The Marquis ran hither and thither, making a hundred suggestions, which were accepted in the soothing manner adopted toward children. He assured Juliette that their absence would be of short duration; that there was indeed no danger, but that he was acceding to the urgent persuasions of Barebone and Colville, who were perhaps unnecessarily alarmed—who did not understand how affairs were conducted in France. He felt assured that law and order must prevail.

"But if they have put Albert de Chantonnay in prison, why should you be safe?" asked Juliette. To which the Marquis replied with a meaning cackle that she had a kind heart, and that it was only natural that it should be occupied at that moment with thoughts of that excellent young man who, in his turn, was doubtless thinking of her in his cell at La Rochelle.

Which playful allusion to Albert de Chantonnay's pretensions was received by their object with a calm indifference.

"When Jean returns," she said, practically, "I will send

him to you at the Brémonts' cottage with food and clothing. But you must not attempt to communicate with us. You would only betray your whereabouts and do no good to us. We shall be quite safe in the château. Marie and I and Madame Maugiron are not afraid."

At which the Marquis laughed heartily. It was so amusing to think that one should be young and pretty—and not afraid. In the mean time Barebone was sealing his letter to Captain Clubbe. He had written it in the Suffolk dialect, spelling all the words as they are pronounced on that coast and employing when he could the Danish and Dutch expressions in daily use on the foreshore, which no French official seeking to translate could find in any dictionary.

Loo gave his instructions to Jean himself, who received them in a silence not devoid of intelligence. The man had been round the walls and reported that nothing stirred beneath them; that there was more than one fire in the town, and that the streets appeared to be given over to disorder and riot.

"It is assuredly a change in the Government," he explained, simply. "And there will be many for Monsieur l'Abbé to bury on Sunday."

Jean was to accompany them to the cottage of an old man who had once lived by ferrying the rare passenger across the Gironde. Having left them here, he could reach Blaye before daylight, from whence a passage up the river to Bordeaux would be easily procurable.

The boatman's cottage stood on the bank of a creek running into the Gironde. It was a lone building hidden among the low dunes that lie between the river and the marsh. Any one approaching it by daylight would be discernible half an hour in advance, and the man's boat, though old, was seaworthy. None would care to cross the

lowlands at night except under the guidance of one or two, who, like Jean, knew their way even in the dark.

Colville and Barebone had to help Jean to move the great casks stored in the crypt of the old chapel by which the entrance to the passage was masked.

"It is, I recollect having been told, more than a passage —it is a ramp," explained the Marquis, who stood by. "It was intended for the passage of horses, so that a man might mount here and ride out into the mill-stream, actually beneath the mill-wheel which conceals the exit."

Juliette, a cloak thrown over her evening dress, had accompanied them and stood near, holding a lantern above her head to give them light. It was an odd scene—a strange occupation for the last of the de Gemosacs. Through the gaps in the toppling walls they could hear the roar of voices and the occasional report of a firearm in the streets of the town below. The door opened easily enough, and Jean, lighting a candle, led the way. Barebone was the last to follow. Within the doorway he turned to say good-bye. The light of the lantern flickered uncertainly on Juliette's fair hair.

"We may be back sooner than you expect, mademoiselle," said Barebone.

"Or you may go—to England," she answered.

CHAPTER XXXIX

"JOHN DARBY"

ALTHOUGH it was snowing hard, it was not a dark night. There was a half moon hidden behind those thin, fleecy clouds, which carry the snow across the North Sea and cast it noiselessly upon the low-lying coast, from Thanet to the Wash, which knows less rain and more snow than any in England.

A gale of wind was blowing from the north-east; not in itself a wild gale, but at short intervals a fresh burst of wind brought with it a thicker fall of snow, and during these squalls the force of the storm was terrific. A man, who had waited on the far shore of the river for a quiet interval, had at last made his way to the Farlingford side. He moored his boat and stumbled heavily up the steps.

There was no one on the quay. The street was deserted, but the lights within the cottages glowed warmly through red blinds here and there. The majority of windows were, however, secured with a shutter, screwed tight from within. The man trotted steadily up the street. He had an unmistakable air of discipline. It was only six o'clock, but night had closed in three hours ago. The coast-guard looked neither to one side nor the other, but ran on at the pace of one who had run far and knows that he cannot afford to lose his breath; for his night's work was only begun.

The coast-guard station stands on the left-hand side of the street, a long, low house in a bare garden. In answer to the loud summons, a red-faced little man opened the door and let out into the night a smell of bloaters and tea—the smell that pervades all Farlingford at six o'clock in the evening.

"Something on the Inner Curlo Bank," shouted the coast-guard in his face, and turning on his heel, he ran with the same slow, organised haste, leaving the red-faced man finishing a mouthful on the mat.

The next place of call was at River Andrew's, the little low cottage with rounded corners, below the church.

"Come out o' that," said the coast-guard, with a contemptuous glance of snow-rimmed eyes at River Andrew's comfortable tea-table. "Ring yer bell. Something on the Inner Curlo Bank."

River Andrew had never hurried in his life, and like all his fellows, he looked upon coast-guards as amateurs mindful, as all amateurs are, of their clothes.

"A'm now going," he answered, rising laboriously from his chair. The coast-guard glanced at his feet clad in the bright green carpet-slippers, dear to seafaring men. Then he turned to the side of the mantelpiece and took the church keys from the nail. For everybody knows where everybody else keeps his keys in Farlingford. He forgot to shut the door behind him, and River Andrew, pessimistically getting into his sea-boots, swore at his retreating back.

"Likely as not, he'll getten howld o' the wrong roup," he muttered; though he knew that every boy in the village could point out the rope of "John Darby," as that which had a piece of faded scarlet flannel twisted through the strands.

In a few minutes the man, who hastened slowly, gave the

call, which every man in Farlingford answered with an emotionless, mechanical promptitude. From each fireside some tired worker reached out his hand toward his most precious possession, his sea-boots, as his forefathers had done before him for two hundred years at the sound of "John Darby." The women crammed into the pockets of the men's stiff oilskins a piece of bread, a half-filled bottle—knowing that, as often as not, their husbands must pass the night and half the next day on the beach, or out at sea, should the weather permit a launch through the surf.

There was no need of excitement, or even of comment. Did not "John Darby" call them from their firesides or their beds a dozen times every winter, to scramble out across the shingle? As often as not, there was nothing to be done but drag the dead bodies from the surf; but sometimes the dead revived—some fair-haired, mystic foreigner from the northern seas, who came to and said, "T'ank you," and nothing else. And next day, rigged out in dry clothes and despatched toward Ipswich on the carrier's cart, he would shake hands awkwardly with any standing near and bob his head and say "T'ank you" again, and go away, monosyllabic, mystic, never to be heard of more. But the ocean, as it is called at Farlingford, seemed to have an inexhaustible supply of such Titans to throw up on the rattling shingle winter after winter. And, after all, they were seafaring men, and therefore brothers. Farlingford turned out to a man, each seeking to be first across the river every time "John Darby" called them, as if he had never called them before.

To-night none paused to finish the meal, and many a cup raised half-way was set down again untasted. It is so easy to be too late.

Already the flicker of lanterns on the sea-wall showed that

the rectory was astir. For Septimus Marvin, vaguely recalling some schoolboy instinct of fair-play, knew the place of the gentleman and the man of education among humbler men in moments of danger and hardship, which should, assuredly, never be at the back.

"Yonder's parson," some one muttered. "His head is clear enow, I'll warrant, when he hears 'John Darby.'"

"'Tis only on Sundays, when 'John' rings slow, 'tis misty," answered a sharp-voiced woman, with a laugh. For half of Farlingford was already at the quay, and three or four boats were bumping and splashing against the steps. The tide was racing out, and the wind, whizzing slantwise across it, pushed it against the wooden piles of the quay, making them throb and tremble.

"Not less'n four to the oars!" shouted a gruff voice, at the foot of the steps, where the salt water, splashing on the snow, had laid bare the green and slimy moss. Two or three volunteers stumbled down the steps, and the first boat got away, swinging down-stream at once, only to be brought slowly back, head to wind. She hung motionless a few yards from the quay, each dip of the oars stirring the water into a whirl of phosphorescence, and then forged slowly ahead.

Septimus Marvin was not alone, but was accompanied by a bulky man, not unknown in Farlingford—John Turner, of Ipswich, understood to live "foreign," but to return, after the manner of East Anglians, when occasion offered. The rector was in oilskins and sou'wester, like any one else, and the gleam of his spectacles under the snowy brim of his headgear seemed to strike no one as incongruous. His pockets bulged with bottles and bandages. Under his arm he carried a couple of blanket horse-cloths, useful for carrying the injured or the dead.

"The Curlo—the Inner Curlo—yes, yes!" he shouted in response to information volunteered on all sides. "Poor fellows! The Inner Curlo, dear, dear!"

And he groped his way down the steps, into the first boat he saw, with a simple haste. John Turner followed him. He had tied a silk handkerchief over his soft felt hat and under his chin.

"No, no!" he said, as Septimus Marvin made room for him on the after-thwart. "I'm too heavy for a passenger. Put my weight on an oar," and he clambered forward to a vacant thwart.

"Mind you come back for us, River Andrew!" cried little Sep's thin voice, as the boat swirled down stream. His wavering bull's-eye lantern followed it, and showed River Andrew and another pulling stroke to John Turner's bow, for the banker had been a famous oar on the Orwell in his boyhood. Then, with a smack like a box on the ear, another snow-squall swept in from the sea, and forced all on the quay to turn their backs and crouch. Many went back to their homes, knowing that nothing could be known for some hours. Others crouched on the landward side of an old coal-shed, peeping round the corner.

Miriam and Sep, and a few others, waited on the quay until River Andrew or another should return. It was an understood thing that the helpers, such as could man a boat or carry a drowned man, should go first. In a few minutes the squall was past, and by the light of the moon, now thinly covered by clouds, the black forms of the first to reach the other shore could be seen straggling across the marsh toward the great shingle-bank that lies between the river and the sea. Two boats were moored at the far side, another was just making the jetty, while a fourth was returning toward the quay. It was River Andrew, faithful

to his own element, who preferred to be first here, rather than obey orders on the open beach.

There were several ready to lend a helping hand against tide and wind, and Miriam and Sep were soon struggling across the shingle, in the footsteps of those who had gone before. The north-east wind seared their faces like a hot iron, but the snow had ceased falling. As they reached the summit of the shingle-bank, they could see in front of them the black line of the sea, and on the beach, where the white of the snow and the white of the roaring surf merged together, a group of men.

One or two stragglers had left this group to search the beach, north or south; but it was known, from a long and grim experience, that anything floating in from the tail of the Inner Curlo Bank must reach the shore at one particular point. A few lanterns twinkled here and there, but near the group of watchers a bonfire of wreckage and tarry fragments and old rope, brought hither for the purpose, had been kindled.

Two boats, hauled out of reach of a spring tide, were being leisurely prepared for launching. There was no hurry; for it had been decided by the older men that no boat could be put to sea through the surf then rolling in. At the turn of the tide, in two hours' time, something might be done.

"Us cannot see anything," a bystander said to Miriam. "It is just there, where I am pointing. Sea Andrew saw something a while back—says it looked like a schooner."

The man stood pointing out to sea to the southward. He carried an unlighted torch—a flare, roughly made, of tarred rope, bound round a stick. At times, one or another would ignite his flare, and go down the beach holding it above his head, while he stood knee deep in the churning

foam to peer out to sea. He would presently return, without comment, to beat out his flare against his foot and take his place among the silent watchers. No one spoke; but if any turned his head sharply to one side or other, all the rest wheeled, like one man, in the same direction and after staring at the tumbled sea would turn reproachful glances on the false alarmist.

Suddenly, after a long wait, four men rushed without a word into the surf; their silent fury suggesting oddly the rush of hounds upon a fox. They had simultaneously caught sight of something dark, half sunk in the shallow water. In a moment they were struggling up the shingle slope toward the fire, carrying a heavy weight. They laid their burden by the fire, where the snow had melted away, and it was a man. He was in oilskins, and some one cut the tape that tied his sou'wester. His face was covered with blood.

"'Tis warm," said the man who had cut away the oilskin cap, and with his hand he wiped the blood away from the eyes and mouth. Some one in the background drew a cork, with his teeth, and a bottle was handed down to those kneeling on the ground.

Suddenly the man sat up—and coughed.

"Shipmets," he said, with a splutter, and lay down again.

Some one held the bottle to his lips and wiped the blood away from his face again.

"My God!" shouted a bystander, gruffly. "'Tis William Brooke, of the Cottages."

"Yes. 'Tis me," said the man, sitting up again. "Not that arm, mate; don't ye touch it. 'Tis bruk. Yes; 'tis me. And 'The Last Hope' is on the tail of the Inner Curlo—and the spar that knocked me overboard fell on the old man, and must have half killed him. But Loo Barebone's aboard."

He rose to his knees, with one arm hanging straight and piteous from his shoulder, then slowly to his feet. He stood wavering for a moment, and wiped his mouth with the back of his hand and spluttered. Then, looking straight in front of him, with that strange air of a whipped dog which humble men wear when the hand of Heaven is upon them, he staggered up the beach toward the river and Farlingford.

"Where are ye goin'?" some one asked.

"Over to mine," was the reply. "A'm going to my old woman, shipmets."

And he staggered away in the darkness.

CHAPTER XI

FARLINGFORD ONCE MORE

After a hurried consultation, Septimus Marvin was deputed to follow the injured man and take him home, seeing that he had as yet but half recovered his senses. This good Samaritan had scarcely disappeared when a shout from the beach drew the attention of all in another direction.

One of the outposts was running toward the fire, waving his lantern and shouting incoherently. It was a coast-guard.

"Comin' ashore in their own boat," he cried. "They're coming in in their own boat!"

"There she rides—there she rides!" added Sea Andrew, almost immediately, and he pointed to the south.

Quite close in, just outside the line of breakers, a black shadow was rising and falling on the water. It seemed to make scarcely any way at all, and each sea that curled underneath the boat and roared toward the beach was a new danger.

"They're going to run her in here," said Sea Andrew. "There's more left on board; that's what that means, and they're goin' back for 'em. If 'twasn't so they'd run in anywheres and let her break."

For one sailor will always tell what another is about, however great the distance intervening.

Slowly the boat came on, rolling tremendously on the

curve of the breakers, between the broken water of the tide-way and the spume of the surf.

"That's Loo at the hellum," said Sea Andrew—the keenest eyes in Farlingford.

And suddenly Miriam swayed sideways against John Turner, who was perhaps watching her, for he gripped her arm and stood firm. No one spoke. The watchers on the beach stared open-mouthed, making unconscious grimaces as the boat rose and fell. All had been ready for some minutes; every preparation made according to the time-honoured use of these coasts: four men with life-lines round them standing knee-deep waiting to dash in deeper, others behind them grouped in two files, some holding the slack of the life-lines, forming a double rank from the shore to the fire, giving the steersman his course. There was no need to wave a torch or shout an order. They were Farlingford men on the shore and Farlingford men in the boat.

At last, after breathless moments of suspense, the boat turned, and came spinning in on the top of a breaker, with the useless oars sticking out like the legs of some huge insect. For a few seconds it was impossible to distinguish anything. The moment the boat touched ground, the waves beating on it enveloped all near it in a whirl of spray, and the black forms seemed to be tumbling over each other in confusion.

"You see," said Turner to Miriam, "he has come back to you after all."

She did not answer but stood, her two hands clasped together on her breast, seeking to disentangle the confused group, half in half out of the water.

Then they heard Loo Barebone's voice, cheerful and energetic, almost laughing. Before they could understand what was taking place his voice was audible again, giving a sharp, clear order, and all the black forms rushed together

down into the surf. A moment later the boat danced out over the crest of a breaker, splashing into the next and throwing up a fan of spray.

"She's through, she's through!" cried some one. And the boat rode for a brief minute head to wind before she turned southward. There were only three on the thwarts—Loo Barebone and two others.

The group now broke up and straggled up toward the fire. One man was being supported, and could scarcely walk. It was Captain Clubbe, hatless, his grey hair plastered across his head by salt water.

He did not heed any one, but sat down heavily on the shingle and felt his leg with one hand, the other arm hung limply.

"Leave me here," he said, gruffly, to two or three who were spreading out a horse-cloth and preparing to carry him. "Here I stay till all are ashore."

Behind him were several new-comers, one of them a little man talking excitedly to his companion.

"But it is a folly," he was saying in French, "to go back in such a sea as that."

It was the Marquis de Gemosac, and no one was taking any notice of him. Dormer Colville, stumbling over the shingle beside him, recognised Miriam in the firelight and turned again to look at her companion as if scarcely believing the evidence of his own eyes.

"Is that you, Turner?" he said. "We are all here,—the Marquis, Barebone, and I. Clubbe took us on board one dark night in the Gironde and brought us home."

"Are you hurt?" asked Turner, curtly.

"Oh, no. But Clubbe's collar-bone is broken and his leg is crushed. We had to leave four on board; not room for them in the boat. That fool Barebone has gone back

for them. He promised them he would. The sea out there is awful!"

He knelt down and held his shaking hands to the flames. Some one handed him a bottle, but he turned first and gave it the Marquis de Gemosac, who was shaking all over like one far gone in a palsy.

Sea Andrew and the coast-guard captain were persuading Captain Clubbe to quit the beach, but he only answered them roughly in monosyllables.

"My place is here till all are safe," he said. "Let me lie."

And with a groan of pain he lay back on the beach. Miriam folded a blanket and placed it under his head. He looked round, recognised her and nodded.

"No place for you, miss," he said, and closed his eyes. After a moment he raised himself on his elbow and looked into the faces peering down at him.

"Loo will beach her anywhere he can. Keep a bright lookout for him," he said. Then he was silent, and all turned their faces toward the sea.

Another snow-squall swept in with a rush from the eastward, and half of the fire was blown away—a trail of sparks hissing on the snow. They built up the fire again and waited, crouching low over the embers. They could see nothing out to sea. There was nothing to be done but to wait. Some had gone along the shore to the south, keeping pace with the supposed progress of the boat, ready to help should she be thrown ashore.

Suddenly the Marquis de Gemosac, shivering over the fire, raised his voice querulously. His emotions always found vent in speech.

"It is a folly," he repeated, "that he has committed. I do not understand, gentlemen, how he was permitted to do such a thing—he whose life is of value to millions."

He turned his head to glance sharply at Captain Clubbe, at Colville, at Turner, who listened with that half-contemptuous silence which Englishmen oppose to unnecessary or inopportune speech.

"Ah!" he said, "you do not understand—you Englishmen—or you do not believe, perhaps, that he is the King. You would demand proofs which you know cannot be produced. I demand no proofs, for I know. I know without any proof at all but his face, his manner, his whole being. I knew at once when I saw him step out of his boat here in this sad village, and I have lived with him almost daily ever since—only to be more sure than at first."

His hearers made no answer. They listened tolerantly enough, as one listens to a child or to any other incapable of keeping to the business in hand.

"Oh, I know more than you suspect," said the Marquis, suddenly. "There are some even in our own party who have doubts, who are not quite sure. I know that there was a doubt as to that portrait of the Queen," he half glanced toward Dormer Colville. "Some say one thing, some another. I have been told that, when the child—Monsieur de Bourbon's father—landed here, there were two portraits among his few possessions—the miniature and a larger print, an engraving. Where is that engraving, one would ask?"

"I have it in my safe in Paris," said a thick voice in the darkness. "Thought it was better in my possession than anywhere else."

"Indeed! And now, Monsieur Turner—" the Marquis raised himself on his knees and pointed in his eager way a thin finger in the direction of the banker—"tell me this. Those portraits to which some would attach importance—they are of the Duchess de Guiche. Admitted? Good! If you yourself—who have the reputation of being a man of

wit—desired to secure the escape of a child and his nurse, would you content yourself with the mere precaution of concealing the child's identity? Would you not go farther and provide the nurse with a subterfuge, a blind, something for the woman to produce and say, 'This is not the little Dauphin. This is so-and-so. See, here is the portrait of his mother?' What so effective, I ask you? What so likely to be believed as a scandal directed against the hated aristocrats? Can you advance anything against that theory?"

"No, Monsieur," replied Turner.

"But Monsieur de Bourbon knows of these doubts," went on the Marquis. "They have even touched his own mind, I know that. But he has continued to fight undaunted. He has made sacrifices—any looking at his face can see that. It was not in France that he looked for happiness, but elsewhere. He was not heart-whole—I who have seen him with the most beautiful women in France paying court to him know that. But this sacrifice, also, he made for the sake of France. Or perhaps some woman of whom we know nothing stepped back and bade him go forward alone, for the sake of his own greatness—who can tell?"

Again no one answered him. He had not perceived Miriam, and John Turner, with that light step which sometimes goes with a vast bulk, had placed himself between her and the firelight. Monsieur de Gemosac rose to his feet and stood looking seaward. The snow-clouds were rolling away to the west, and the moon, breaking through, was beginning to illumine the wild sky.

"Gentlemen," said the Marquis, "they have been gone a long time?"

Captain Clubbe moved restlessly, but he made no answer. The Marquis had, of course, spoken in French, and the Captain had no use for that language.

The group round the fire had dwindled until only half a dozen remained. One after another the watchers had moved away uneasily toward the beach. The Marquis was right—the boat had been gone too long.

At last the moon broke through, and the snowy scene was almost as light as day.

John Turner was looking along the beach to the south, and one after another the watchers by the fire turned their anxious eyes in the same direction. The sea, whipped white, was bare of any wreck. "The Last Hope" of Farlingford was gone. She had broken up or rolled into deep water.

A number of men were coming up the shingle in silence. Sea Andrew, dragging his feet wearily, approached in advance of them.

"Boat's thrown up on the beach," he said to Captain Clubbe. "Stove in by a sea. We've found them."

He stood back and the others, coming slowly into the light, deposited their burdens side by side near the fire. The Marquis, who had understood nothing, took a torch from the hand of a bystander and held it down toward the face of the man they had brought last.

It was Loo Barebone, and the clean-cut, royal features seemed to wear a reflective smile.

Miriam had come forward toward the fire, and by chance or by some vague instinct the bearers had laid their burden at her feet. After all, as John Turner had said, Loo Barebone had come back to her. She had denied him twice, and the third time he would take no denial. The taciturn sailors laid him there and stepped back—as if he was hers and this was the inevitable end of his short and stormy voyage.

She looked down at him with tired eyes. She had done the right, and this was the end. There are some who may

say that she had done what she thought was right, and this only seemed to be the end. It may be so.

The Marquis de Gemosac was dumb for once. He looked round him with a half-defiant question in his eyes. Then he pointed a lean finger down toward the dead man's face.

"Others may question," he said, "but I know—I *know*."

THE END

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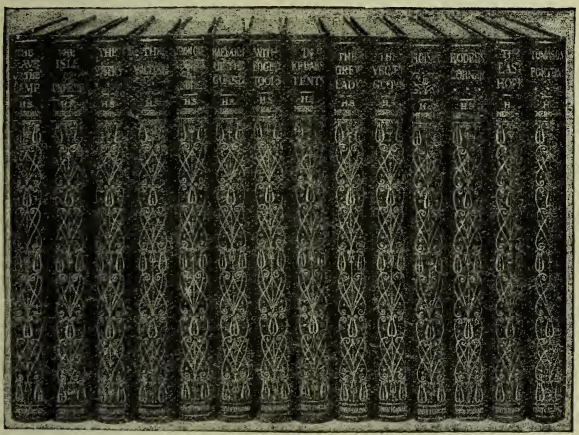

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